August

The Black Cat

1917

Clever Short Stories

Nuxated Iron to Make New Age of Beautiful Women and Vigorous Iron Men

Say Physicians—Quickly Puts Roses Into the Cheeks of Women and Most Astonishing Youthful Vitality Into the Veins of Men—It Often Increases the Strength and Endurance of Delicate, Nervous "Run Down" Folks 100 Per Cent in Two Weeks' Time.

Opinion of Dr. Schuyler C. Jaques, Visiting Surgeon of St. Elizabeth's Hospital, New York City

SINCE the remarkable discovery of organic iron, Nuxated Iron or "Fer Nuxate" as the French call it, has taken the country by storm, it is conservatively estimated that over three million people annually are taking it in this country alone. Most astonishing results are reported from its use by both physicians and laymen. So much so that doctors predict that we shall soon have a new age of far more beautiful, rosy-cheeked women and vigorous iron men.

Dr. Ferdinand King, a New York Physician and Medical Author, when interviewed on this subject, said: "There can be no vigorous iron men, without iron." Pallor means anæmia. Anæmia means iron deficiency. The skin of anæmic men and women is pale, the flesh flabby. The muscles lack tone; the brain fags and the memory fails and often they become weak, nervous, irritable, despondent and melancholy. When the iron goes from the blood of women, the roses go from their cheeks.

"In the most common foods of America, the starches, sugars, table syrups, polished rice, white bread, soda crackers, biscuits, macaroni, spaghetti, tapioca, sago, farina, degerminated corn-meal, no longer is iron to be found. Refining processes have removed the iron of Mother Earth from these impoverished foods, and silly methods of home cookery, by throwing down the waste pipe the water in which vegetables are cooked, are responsible for another grave iron loss.

"Therefore, if you wish to preserve your youthful vim and vigor to a ripe old age, you must supply the iron deficiency in your food by using some form of organic iron, just as you would use salt when your food has not enough salt."

Dr. E. Sauer, a Boston physician who has studied both in this country and in great European medical institutions, said: "As I have said a hundred times over, organic iron is the greatest of all strength builders. If the people would only take Nuxated Iron when they feel weak or rundown, instead of dosing themselves with habit-forming drugs, stimulants and alcoholic beverages I am convinced that in this way they could ward off disease, preventing it becoming organic in thousands of cases and thereby the lives of thousands might be saved who now die every year from pneumonia, grippe, kidney, liver, heart trouble and other dangerous maladies. The real and true cause which started their disease was nothing more nor less than a weakened condition brought on by lack of iron in the blood.

"Not long ago a man came to me who was nearly half a century old and asked me to give him a preliminary examination for life insurance. I was astonished to find him with a blood pressure of a boy of twenty and as full of vigor, vim and vitality as a young man; in fact, a young man he really was, notwithstanding his age. The secret, he said, was taking iron—Nuxated Iron had filled him with renewed life. At thirty he was in bad health; at forty-six he was care worn and nearly all in. Now, at fifty, after taking Nuxated Iron, a miracle of vitality and his face beaming with the buoyancy of youth.

"Iron is absolutely necessary to enable your blood to change food into living tissue. Without it, no matter how much or what you eat, your food merely passes through you without doing you any good. You don't get the strength out of it, and as a consequence you become weak, pale and sickly looking, just like a plant trying to grow in a soil deficient in iron. If you are not strong or well, you owe it to yourself to make the following test: See how long you can work or how far you can walk without becoming tired. Next take two five-grain tablets of ordinary nuxated iron three times a day after meals for two weeks. Then test your strength again and see how much you have gained. I have seen dozens of nervous, run-down people who were ailing all the while double their strength and endurance and entirely rid themselves of all symptoms of dyspepsia, liver and other troubles in from ten to fourteen days' time simply by taking iron in the proper form. And

this, after they had in some cases been doctoring for months without obtaining any benefit. But don't take the old form of reduced iron, iron acetate, or tincture of iron simply to save a few cents. The iron demanded by Mother Nature for the red coloring matter in the blood of her children is, alas! not that kind of iron. You must take iron in a form that can be easily absorbed and assimilated to do you any good, otherwise it may prove worse than useless. Many an athlete and prizefighter has won the day simply because he knew the secret of great strength and endurance and filled his blood with iron before he went into the affray; while many another has gone down in inglorious defeat simply for the lack of iron."

Dr. Schuyler C. Jaques, visiting surgeon, St. Elizabeth's Hospital, New York City, said: "I have never before given out any medical information or advice for publication, as I ordinarily do not believe in it. But in the case of Nuxated Iron I feel I would be remiss in my duty not to mention it. I have taken it myself and given it to my patients with most surprising and satisfactory results. And those who wish to increase their strength, power and endurance will find it a most remarkable and wonderfully effective remedy."

NOTE—Nuxated Iron, which is prescribed and recommended above by physicians in such a great variety of cases, is not a patent medicine nor secret remedy, but one which is well known to druggists and whose iron constituents are widely prescribed by eminent physicians both in Europe and America. Unlike the older inorganic iron products, it is easily assimilated, does not injure the teeth, make them black, nor upset the stomach; on the contrary, it is a most potent remedy in nearly all forms of indigestion as well as for nervous, run-down conditions. The manufacturers have such a great confidence in nuxated iron that they offer to forfeit $100.00 to any charitable institution if they cannot take any man or woman under 60 who lacks iron, and increase their strength 100 per cent or over in four weeks' time, provided they have no serious organic trouble. They also offer to refund your money if it does not at least double your strength and endurance in ten days' time. It is dispensed by all good druggists.

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THE BLACK CAT CLUB

ONE of the May prize winners takes us to task in this manner: "It is interesting to find the BLACK CAT editorially lamenting the dearth of good critical essays and then requesting that members name the stories in the order of their merit. Which is superior, the rose or the carnation; the tomato or the potato; Beethoven's Fifth Symphony or Chopin's Butterfly Etude? Name the twelve apostles in the order of their virtue. State the comparative worth of the three graces, of the seven arts, of the ten commandments. Ridiculous!"

We regret that this writer misunderstood our paragraph on critical essays in the May "Club." While apparently lamenting the dearth of good critical essays, we were in reality lamenting the necessity of resorting so frequently to "but," "yet," "however," "notwithstanding," and allied words to smooth over the conflicting statements of our readers. An essay must be consistent even though it is a composite of opinions that differ widely.

While none of us would attempt to state the comparative worth of the ten commandments, we might find the relative values of the tomato and the potato by checking up the nutritive constituents. So in considering short stories it is possible to compile a comparative list by applying the tests of substance and form; but this may involve much fine argument and detailed analysis that is not absolutely essential. If members will criticise each story separately and then name the stories in the order of their appeal, we will assume, owing to the varying standards of measurement, that they are arranged in the order of their merit.

The returns in the May contest resulted in the awarding of the $25 prize to Joe Bledsoe, the author of FUZZ. Stories are criticised in the order of their standing in the contest.

Plots are like skeletons—well proportioned flesh must be hung on them to make the result presentable. In FUZZ, we have a well proportioned plot, clothed in a style that is entertaining and piquant. A hobo and a tramp dog are, in real life, both uninteresting and offensive; but a subtle charm of style plus human-canine interest metamorphoses Greeny and Fuzz into entertaining and pleasing characters. The devotion of Fuzz to his master and his master to Fuzz is the real story; the little love plot is threadbare and merely dragged in as a *raison d'etre* for Greeny's redemption. A serious technical fault seems to me to be the introduction of White Line Charlie, a character who uses up a couple of columns and serves no definite purpose. We good-naturedly accept the improbability in this story, somewhat over-lengthy in its development, and gracefully recognize the spark of moral potential in the raggedly winsome Greeny.

Upon reading THE SCRATCHED RECORD, one is struck immediately with its improbability, yet it must be admitted that the intensity of the dramatic situations makes it a compelling story. Certainly it is far ahead of other stories in the May number on the score of dramatic possibilities. The plot is novel and is worked out smoothly with no by-paths and no false leads to excite the reader. The interest is aroused in the opening paragraph and vividly sustained to a logical conclusion with enough left unsaid to challenge the interpretative analysis of the reader. The author does not, however, achieve the realism and dramatic effect for which she is striving. The story has no well-outlined personalities, but the writer does not stake her success on characterization and therefore does not fall by it. Perhaps the strongest element in the story is the revelation that the "Record" is a human reality.

THIRTY-FIVE TWENTY-SEVENTHS has merit in two particulars: It has an original conclusion and it deals with the romance of the commonplace. The diabolical quality of the slave-driving boss is striking in its ingenuity, if not over-convincing. His character, however, compels admiration rather than sympathy. The story carries such an emotional appeal that one can hardly forgive the author for the ending, yet it is in this ending that the author achieves the artistic touch which is the final triumph. Had the last four paragraphs been omitted it might have been a good story in a "sob-sister" way, but it would have lost half of its charm through the omission.

THANKS TO THE CAPE COD FINN is one of those stories in which the author does not reach the standard which he has set for himself. We are informed at the beginning of this narrative that it is one of the strangest adventures that ever befell etc., etc., but this promised novelty is nearly absorbed by the overplus of padding in the story. The character delineation is good, although the lumber jacks have no distinct characteristics, taken individually. We can put ourselves in the places of Wally, Danny and Farquhar and recall the dissolution of our own pet hobbies. "'Tis distance lends enchantment to the view." And that is what the Cape Cod Finn thought, too, when he took the first freight out of town.

SUNK BY A FLOATING MINE, in spite of its rambling plot and an over-abundance of similes, is full of interesting descriptions and incidents and its strength lies in its racy diction and characterization. The modern world, naturally enough, is rich in

(*Continued on Page* 45.)

WHEN THE BAND PLAYS

BY HELEN TOPPING MILLER

....and an ennuied trooper runs amuck, and a school-teacher goes in bathing, and a crazy Panamanian becomes violent, it needs only a person with a typewriter and some imagination to pool this combination of events and personages and make a story.

TO the astute officials who manage the great canal which shimmers like a silver necklace on the slender throat of the isthmus, the southeast wind is a sickly wind, breeder of black flies, sharp fevers, and sudden and bitter violence.

A week of it sets the swart, oleaginous native to slumbering uneasily in the parched shade of his house, from which sleep he rouses to whet his knife, kick his dog and prowl, a wiry, vengeful fury, lusting for disaster.

To the white man, however, is granted no such relaxation. On him the immoral wind blows like a dry, sneering breath, sucking the virtue out of his veins and leaving them full of strange desires and keen unrest. It is when the southeast wind blows that the owners of the reeking hot cockpits in remote corners of the city of Panama, spread down fresh sawdust and retire into shadowy corners, grinning complacently. Also the gentlemanly pirates who purvey pungent drinks in gourds beaded with moisture, wax prosperous and insolent.

There had been three days of wind. The old lieutenant commanding the barracks out beyond the old Spanish church already wore an expression of settled anxiety which two weeks of stiff norther would hardly dispel. For a southeaster blows over an army post like a reckless breath from purgatory, turning sober men with wives at home into sullen devils tempered with lyddite.

Angus McGowan had neither wife nor kin. And for six weeks before the hot wind began to blow, his dark eyes had glinted with a greenish, sulky light and his chin squared in defiant moodiness above his olive drab collar. The lieutenant was not disappointed when on the third night of the wind Angus ran amuck.

It is not a joyful job to paste an iodine bandage on the hock of a restive horse when that animal, during the process of surgery, endeavors to eat hay and fight off uncounted varieties of bloodthirsty insects. Angus, struggling with a melted and twisting strip of adhesive plaster and avoiding a menacing shoe, felt an overpowering contempt for life suddenly rise up within him like a poisonous fungus, straining at his throat, surging through his limbs, and beating sullenly at the top of his head. Whereupon he cast the bandage into the water-trough, kicked the iodine bottle into saffron-hued splinters, and tramped out, under the eye of the stable boss.

Straight down through the lighted town he went, past the cafés where northern tourists bought New Jersey food at Hudson-Bay prices, past the tobacco shops and the great hotels. The band was playing on the plaza but he paid no attention. Ordinarily Angus was at his best when the band was playing. Given a certain amount of gold braid and the strains of *Semper Fidelis*, and army life intoxicated him like a deep draft of liquid glory. As long as the band played he was a strutting, high-principled savior of the nation. But tonight, with the wind sulking about him like the hot presence of a loathsome body, the band had no power to stir him. He hated it—blatant trumpet and maddening drum. He wanted to be let alone. So he stalked out to the edge of the town where, half-hidden in a ragged thicket near the Presbyterian missionary's house,

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lay a black, shallow little lagoon.

The wise and efficient officials had not yet coated the face of all the waters above the earth with thick layers of oil to discourage mosquitoes, and the little lagoon glinted in the starlight, a circle of limpid jet. Angus McGowan sat down on the dock beside the missionary's boathouse, in a state of mental chaos blended of black fury and sodden discouragement. Three impulses fought for dominance of his mood. Should he drop a generous charge of nitroglycerine into the canal at the ocean gate, or should he stow himself in the hold of a Porto Rican banana boat and thereafter stoke coal all the way to Norfolk, or should he silently slide off the little dock and thus put an end to all things save a half dozen bubbles?

Miss Lucy Granger abode in the Presbyterian missionary's house and taught mathematics to the children of American officers and hotel promoters. Miss Lucy had been reared in an atmosphere of frosty propriety, navy beans and shorthorn cattle, on a sandy Michigan farm. Just why she had chosen to leave the shelter of the family windmill to steam humidly in the languid air of the canal zone was something which her outraged family was unable to fathom. Miss Lucy however, was very well satisfied; or she had been, until the southeast wind began to blow. When the hot, wicked currents, drifting restlessly up from the steaming, savage jungles of the Amazon river, smote her, several disturbing things happened to Miss Lucy.

First of all, she found it hard to tolerate the modest dotted swiss dress and canvass shoes that she wore. She longed fervently for the primitive freedom of the cave-woman, robed in the pelt of an outraged flying squirrel. She longed to go in swimming; the cool depths of the padre's well tempted her madly. So on this night she compromised by dragging a thick, one-piece swimming suit from the bottom of her trunk and setting forth, stealthily, alone, in the black, insect-melodic night.

Her pedantic modesty somehow drained and altered by the vagabond wind, Miss Lucy tiptoed to the missionary's boathouse and donned the bathing suit in discrete and breathless darkness. Then mindful of scorpions, she sidled nervously out to the edge of the lagoon and slipped in.

Now, to plunge, side-on, into a Michigan lake, where the water is green and fairly deep and the bottom is gravel and clean, is one thing, but to slide into a greasy Panamanian lagoon, where pigs wallow by day and conscienceless citizens dump garbage by night, is something very different. And this Miss Lucy Granger discovered before her wilful feet had touched bottom, for the lagoon had no bottom. The slimy batter which lay beneath it grew thicker and heavier the farther one penetrated into it, but solidity there was none. All this Miss Granger discovered; whereupon she opened her mouth to scream, but because numbers of nameless objects promptly floated into it, she closed it quickly. What had been intended for a cry died a gurgle. Reaching out desperately, she began to tread water and struggle for something to grasp. By the black airlessness, she knew that she was under a dock, and stretched out groping hands for the posts. But only the horrible water slid between her fingers until she discovered, squarely above her head, something projecting, black and solid. With one hand she reached for it. Her fingers closed on a man's boot.

"Jeminy Cripes!" exclaimed the astonished voice of trooper McGowan.

"Help!" squeaked Miss Granger, in a thin and weary little voice.

Angus had been sitting in moody contemplation of the black water, wondering just what portion of it was deepest. But one cannot plunge into a lagoon of a dark night and leave an unknown young lady of faint voice but certain grip, floundering unsalvaged in the flood. So Angus gave up conjecturing.

"Leggo my boot," he commanded.

Miss Lucy let go. Promptly she fell, like a plummet, some eight feet into the combination of substances which gravity had collected at the bottom of the river,

recovered herself with a spasmodic little kick and bobbed to the surface again.

By this time McGowan was on hand with an oar which he had found under the eaves of the missionary's boathouse.

"Grab it," he shouted, poking it awkwardly in her general direction.

Miss Granger grabbed it.

Angus McGowan was built broad in the beam, like a dreadnaught, and the girl was slender. But even the wispiest of women acquire a sodden weightiness when forked up bodily out of a lagoon, dripping and flopping like a sunfish. Angus swung his catch awkwardly upon the dock and sat down and gasped. Miss Granger, landing in a heap, sat up and gasped.

Angus recovered his voice first. "Don't you know any better than to swim after dark?" he demanded.

Miss Granger pushed the wet hair out of her mouth and spat out several things. She had an uncomfortable suspicion that some enthusiastic small creature with many legs was travelling up her spine.

"It's so hot!" she whimpered at last.

"In two minutes more," growled her rescuer, "you'd have been under the mud. They'd have picked you up around by the padre's duck puddle about four o'clock tomorrow afternoon."

"But it was so—hot!" pleaded the girl, still writhing frantically in an effort to dislodge the crawling beast.

"Oh, was it?" repeated trooper McGowan, most impolitely. "And because it's hot why— Come on, Mamie, let's jump in the river!"

Then the mocking falsetto of his voice fell swiftly. In earlier days he had been reared the proper son of a pious old Scotch Presbyterian father. Something of that better era came into his tone as he rose up.

"Are you cold?" he inquired respectfully. "You're shaking."

Miss Lucy Granger was rent between nervous terror of the thing which jigged up her back and a sudden maidenly fear of this unknown person who dragged her out of a lagoon and then growled at her like a dock hand afterwards. But panic won.

"It's crawling—something up my back!" she cried.

"Huh!" grunted McGowan.

With unabashed fingers he drew down the neck of the shabby swimming suit and explored the wet little shoulders of the mathematics teacher from Michigan, while she sat shuddering at the awfulness of it. Then he drew the intruder forth;—one of those dry, crackling, many-legged beetles which slide hideously over the top of the water. Miss Granger heard the thing spat in the lagoon.

"Now—you'd better go home," he advised.

She rose up, but her knees shook under her. Her teeth rattled and she reached convulsively, gripping the front of his coat.

"It's—I'm all right," she chattered presently, when he had braced her upright and steadied her with a strong hand on her shoulders. "I guess—I'm cold—that's all!"

"Come along; I'll hold you," ordered McGowan, steering her off the dock.

The mud at the end of it was cool and sticky, and Miss Granger's toes sank into it. Somehow, the mud suggested snakes, and she jerked her feet up gingerly. Also the green vines, snarled about the boathouse, reeked of terror. A sickening fear seized her. How had she dared to come alone—in this darkness? She had never before experienced the madness which comes with the southeast wind. Then she turned suddenly cold all over.

"My clothes," she whispered, "they're in there—in that boathouse!"

The man gallantly let go her arm. "I'll run along," he said politely. "You'd better get 'em on. You're shaking all over."

But the stiffness was all gone out of her spine. She crumpled down in a heap among the terrifying vines and reached frantically for his retreating coattail.

"I can't!" she wailed. "I'm afraid. I can't go in there—it's so dark!"

"Gee whiz!" eloquently murmured trooper McGowan.

Once more he stood her on her feet and held her until she could stand alone. Then most respectfully he advanced into the

boathouse, from whence he presently emerged with a chaste white bundle.

"Where are your stockings?" he asked bluntly.

The kindly night hid the burning embarrassment upon Miss Granger's face. She could have died of shame—and yet she dare not brave the black horror of that boathouse.

"Inside the shoes," she said, so faintly as scarcely to be heard.

"Now," he said briskly, "you'd better hustle. Wherever you live we'd better get there quick. You're likely to get a bad fever from that filthy water—as hot as it is"

But the girl drew back. "I'd better go alone," she suggested timidly. "I live right here—at the missionary's."

"All right," he agreed. "I'll wait here."

She tiptoed away. Then in a moment she came flying back, a white, unguessed garment flapping like a banner.

"They're all on the porch," she gasped; "the Baptist one and the English professor; I can't go in—like this!"

He looked at her. In the faint starlight her limbs shone very white and her garment appeared amazingly scanty.

"No," he agreed, "you couldn't."

"If I had a light—"

"I'll get you one," he volunteered.

He struck off through the thicket. She waited, crouched on the doorstep of the boathouse, her apparel under her arm. Then he came back. Without a word he jerked the hasp of the boathouse door loose and stepped inside, lighted a bit of candle and skewered it on the oarlock.

"I swiped it out of the church," he said. "The old saint who had it didn't need it. They'll give him another one tomorrow."

Miss Granger stepped inside. In the wavering yellow light of the candle she surveyed her rescuer. He was tall and rather handsome, in a dark, sullen, fashion, with stiff black hair brushed straight back from a high forehead. And he was in the olive drab of the cavalry.

"You're a soldier?" she asked.

He nodded. Some of the old discontent now showed like embers in his eyes. For in the canal zone the white women have a way of looking at troopers of the line, a kindly way, something like the look they give a faithful negro servant or a friendly dog. Miss Lucy Granger looked at Angus McGowan now, like that.

"Yes, I'm a soldier," he said.

And then, as if in answer to her look, he stared at her very straight. And Miss Granger, remembering what the oily lagoon had done to her hair and her ugly bathing suit, blushed painfully.

Even in her fresh dotted swiss and panama hat, Miss Granger was not pretty. The yellow tropic sun had baked such beauty out of her skin as had been fostered by the frosty Michigan air. She was swarthy and a bit faded, with fine sunlines about her eyes and the prim mouth, which is a purely scholastic acquisition. Her hair, which ordinarily lay brown and smooth, an even chestnut shade in every strand and curl, was drabbed and black with water. Never beautiful, she appeared most unbeautiful in the searching light of the little candle.

McGowan steadied the boat until she climbed into it, and dumped her clothes on the seat. Then he went out and closed the door.

Would he wait, she wondered?

But Angus, having recovered rather abruptly from the madness which had stirred in him for weeks, did not wait.

A week went by—a week of southeast wind, drinking the earth dry and demanding steam of all living—a week of inert, irritating heat and of sharp thunder unaccompanied by merciful rain. And for Miss Lucy Granger, a week of maddening calculus, of homicidal geometry and of intolerable trigonometry, of restless sleep in her airless room in the Presbyterian missionary's house—and of puzzled wonder.

Against the dark drabness of her days, the sharp recklessness of that one wild night stood out like a splash of red paint. She bore the memory of it about with her like a guilty token sewn into her garment, which she brought out and gazed at whenever she was alone. And with the thought of it came always a confused shame and a vague wonder. She watched the soldiers, occasional details of which tramped

through the streets, but never yet had she discovered a sullen, handsome face, set under a high forehead and stiff black hair.

So at last, on a sultry afternoon, she tucked two dozen Euclidean propositions into the drawer of her desk, interring them under a weighty mail-order catalogue, and fetching out her freshest hat, walked out to the barracks beyond the old Spanish church.

It was a long walk and weary, but the wind was in her ears again—the wild world wind which sifts madness from every people on the earth and scatters it like pollen in its track. She did not heed the white hot condemnation of the sun, nor the dust which twisted like smoke affectionately around her.

She came into the parade ground by the town-side gate. And just at that instant, Angus McGowan, in the last lap of nine days' fatigue duty, drove across the parade ground with a stable wagon which had conveyed fertility to the quartermaster's garden.

Squarely in the path they met. And at the vision in white dotted swiss, the stolid army mules halted of their own accord. Angus stared for a minute before he remembered to pull off his hat.

"Oh," stammered Miss Lucy, "I wanted to see you—to thank you—for saving me that night."

Angus twisted uncomfortably in his seat. Nine days' fatigue is a stiff price to pay for an hour's rebellion, but so far, Angus had paid it with astonishing meekness. In a flash, he saw that the girl did not understand the situation; that she considered the armed guard who walked beside the wagon only an integral part of a bewildering army system. He ducked his head in a confused bow and answered with brief politeness.

"'T's all right," he said.

The mules started again. They were well trained army mules and any breach of the regulations was hateful in their ears. The guard also shifted his gun uneasily on his collar bone and stared quite frankly at Miss Granger; at her plain little face alight with adventure, at her eyes and her smooth, glossy, chestnut hair.

"G'wan!" snarled the guard.

The wagon moved on.

Miss Granger, thus dismissed, turned and hurried away, her cheeks scarlet, her eyes on the ground.

And thus this tale would have ended had it not been for a brown, untutored Panamanian named Antois.

That worthy, having imbibed the violent breath of the southeast wind, became straightway moved to murder and arson and like joyful practices.

Antois wore a scapular and every Michaelmas day he carried a fat cock to the padre. So, being fired with atmospheric ardor and also by certain flaming liquids obtained by stealth, he set out, the whites of his eyes agleam, determined to avenge the grievances of the church. He would begin with these puling, saint-hating Protestants, who demanded of a laborer much work for little money and ate meat on Fridays. This Presbyterian one, now—who said long prayers through his nose—his house was isolated and dry as tinder.

Angus McGowan, having been restored to rank, walked around the little plaza on a hot night. The wind was in the southeast and it still moved in Angus's ears with strange, disquieting currents. But he put the fitful discontent which nagged him aside, with only a vague wonder as to what in thunder ailed him.

The band was playing. Angus was at his best when the band played. He sat down at the little table outside the charmed circle where the officers sat with their ladies and drank black coffee flavored with condensed cream made in Waukegan, Illinois, and opened a half-cold bottle of ginger ale. He had hardly coaxed the foam off the top of it when a scrubby soldier with dirty leggins and a pale face plunged into the crowd.

"The niggers have fired Doctor Caldwell's house," he cried.

There was a clatter of chairs and a few women cried out. Angus's bottle rolled, blubbering, to the ground. Doctor Caldwell was the Presbyterian missionary.

"But they're not at home," exclaimed a

woman with some relief. "They left for Colon this morning."

Angus bent mechanically to rescue the bottle. Then he straightened so suddenly that his spine fairly cracked. The girl—the little, plain, wide-eyed girl—the girl he had fished out of the lagoon! Was she there—alone?

Like a flame he tore through the crowd, thrusting them to right and left. He knew now what the uneasiness was which had scorched him for days; it was the memory of a pair of brown eyes under a panama hat and a swarthy, sensitive little face and a mouth that quivered!

He ran, hardly knowing where, blindly, his heart pounding. Ahead of him, against the black sky, danced a devilish little flare of light—orange and red and billowing purple.

Other men ran, too, but Angus paid no heed to them. He crashed through the thicket that skirted the lagoon, missing the road. Flame was rolling up the low wall of the missionary's house now and the light of it was scarlet on the water. Angus tore through the little garden, crushing the melons under his feet, and vaulted a low fence.

Then out of the gloom something white rose up—a swart, low figure with eyes agleam. There was a leap of acrid flame in Angus's face and a dull roar. He felt his arm leap into the air and then fall back, aching dully. A hot, spinning pain, that seemed to scatter sparks, crashed through his shoulder; but he did not halt.

He leaped upon the crouching white figure and bore it to the ground. Biting, kicking and screaming, he pinioned it down, and having no weapon, he rained blows from his heavy boots upon the dark, maddened face of Antois, the pillager, until the black man lay prone and jerked no more. Then Angus scrambled up, and disregarding the pain that tore at him like the fangs of a beast, ran around the blazing house. The roof was a heaving torch by now and the light of it lay like a searchlight on the faces of the men who thronged and tramped in the little yard.

Twice Angus circled the house, frantic, half mad. Then in the dark little chicken-house he found her, hiding in a corner, her naked feet peeping from under a thin purple kimono, her hair tumbling down her back in a waving chestnut mane. Straight into his arms she came like a frightened child, with such terror in her eyes as rouses white men to fury. Angus thought of the twitching bundle behind the garden fence, and vengeful satisfaction was in his soul.

"He came in," she gasped, clinging to him, horror still keen upon her. "I heard him on the stairs; and Old Anna ran. I shall never forget his awful eyes—never! And I ran and screamed—and I hid out here. He searched a little while and then he set fire to the house."

Angus stooped a little and gathered her close. She was very small and light, and the feel of her thin, quivering, little body went through him like a pain.

"Hang on to me," he said. "I'll take you to some of the women. They'll look after you."

She slipped an arm around his neck. Very simply she did it, as a child might have done. Then she drew back with a shrill cry.

"It's blood!" she screamed. "You're hurt!"

Angus laughed.

"He winged me—the nigger did," he scoffed. "It's nothing. I'll get it fixed pretty soon."

And having spoken thus lightly, he turned and reeled a little, and tumbled in an inert khaki crumple at her feet.

For eight weeks Angus McGowan lay in the hospital with a shattered shoulder, while the army surgeons labored to bring back life to the arm without which McGowan would be of little value in the army. The southeast wind died away wearily, and the cool northers began to blow. Then the surgeons ordered Angus to get up and walk, adding that a Brazilian ship would sail in a fortnight and that he might as well go home.

All that day Angus sat in his bunk and brooded. With the contradictoriness which is part of our subtle nature, Angus thrust out of the army, suddenly found himself longing to be back in the thick of

it. The band played, and he rose up and paced his room and cursed. A ship blew a mournful siren outside the ocean gate, and he buried his face in his hands and hated the world and all the things which be above the firmament.

At night the southeast wind came up out of the sea once more and blew its vandal breath among the banana leaves and the sentinel palms. Also the moon was born, a swollen moon, very yellow and intimate, with such a knowing grin as vagabond moons wear.

Angus McGowan, burrowing in his hot bunk, in the hospital annex, hung his coat over the window to shut out the light of it. But like vapor it sifted in, painting strange pictures on the walls until Angus writhed with the restlessness that was in him. Then he rose up, and as best he could, struggled one-armed into his clothes. Down the post street he went and through the city where the uneasy wind was moving, and out to the little thicket where the Presbyterian missionary's boathouse was and the padre's ducks paddled happily in the lagoon, talking caressing duck talk in the moonlight.

For a long time Angus sat on the little dock, staring into the black water. Then, with a sudden squaring of his shoulders, he rose up and marched along the path to the new house of the missionary—very new and unpainted and silvery and odorous of fresh-sawed wood.

He found her on the screened porch, correcting examination papers by the smutty light of a little oil lamp. She had on a limp green dress, and somehow she looked tired out and old. He walked in without ceremony and flopped down into a sagging canvas chair. She had come to the hospital many times, but always the orderly had waited. There were many things he had to tell her, so he plunged in abruptly.

"That day—at the barracks—" he began without preamble, "I—I wanted to talk to you—but I was under guard."

"You—what?" she asked, letting the papers slide to the floor.

"They had me in—nine days," he explained, shortly, "for skipping out."

"In the guard house?" she demanded.

"Nine days," he repeated. "It was worth it," he stammered, coloring.

A flush crept into Miss Lucy's face, and some of the tired age went out of it.

"In the guard house," she exclaimed, indignantly, "for saving me from drowning!"

"No," said Angus; "for running off without leave. But I'm not sorry—now."

"How is your arm?" she inquired suddenly.

"Punk," he announced. "They're sending me home—tomorrow."

Miss Lucy closed her eyes. But in spite of her pedantic self-control her lips quivered.

Tomorrow! And there would be Euclid and trigonometry and the problem of the three unknown quantities for her tomorrow—and the other tomorrows. Some of the sick misery she felt showed in her piteous face; whereupon Angus McGowan did a thing that surprised even himself. He bent and kissed Miss Lucy Granger full on her prim, twitching mouth. Then he ripped off the sling that held the arm, and straightened it—the arm that the bullet of mad Antois had splintered. Wrist and elbow and shoulder he bent it, slowly, with a bit of a wince. It was one-sided and a little stiff; but it was an arm—a strong man's arm.

"Will you go home with me—sweetheart—" he asked huskily—"tomorrow?"

Miss Lucy nodded,—a little nod. She could not speak because her throat ached intolerably.

Angus moved over quite boldly and gathered her into his good arm. "Put out that darn light," he commanded hoarsely.

Up on the plaza, the bass-horn man blew the water out of his valves and took a long, deep breath. The snare drummer tightened his drum-head and poised his sticks. The cornet player turned his eyes to heaven.

"Mid pleasures and palaces—" tooted the band.

"He—he—he!" laughed the southeast wind.

THE GLOVED REVENGE

BY JOHN BERRY

A rural butcher, whose profession has not entirely destroyed his sense of the ideal, invents a punishment to fit the crime when his wife becomes infatuated with another man.

HE said his name was Rudik. He was white and thin, but he had bright eyes, the bright black eyes that women like. He was from the Capital and was a member of the Assembly. He had worked too hard and the cough had set in. His doctor had sent him to the country, where he could breathe good, fresh air. "And," he said to Iglat the butcher, "the cattle you slaughter are famous hereabouts for their tender, juicy meat. What of their blood?"

"Their blood is rich and red," answered Iglat. "I will give it to you warm and foaming from the beasts. You can hold the pail yourself and get it as it gushes from their slashed necks."

"That's what I want," said the stranger. "That will build me up. Will you take me to board with you?"

Iglat asked Gersa, his wife. She was willing, though her work was very heavy. She was a good wife; and isn't it a good wife's duty to earn an extra penny for her husband? Besides, the boarder would pay well; and there wouldn't be much cooking to do, with him drinking all that blood. So it was quickly arranged.

Rudik was staying at the village inn. Iglat called for him in his meat wagon to drive him to the farm, two miles out. There were red and black stains on the wagon and odors of recent slaughtering. But Rudik did not seem to mind such little things as that. He laughed boyishly and joked with the butcher all the way to the farm, telling him droll stories of city life and offering him wonderful cigarettes out of a gold case.

When the stranger alighted from the wagon he had a bad coughing spell. Whereupon Iglat, who was a giant, picked him up as if he were a woman and carried him into the house. He protested and kicked out his legs like a baby. Gersa could not help laughing at the funny sight. Rudik himself laughed—after a bit. As for Iglat, he roared. "Don't rattle the dishes on the table so, Iglat!" cried Gersa.

It was all very jolly.

Gersa had cooked a fine supper, and the steak (from old Zingare's prize steer, which had been the talk of the recent fair, and which Iglat had slaughtered only yesterday) was the best Rudik had ever eaten. He complimented the butcher on the meat and the butcher's wife on the cooking; and both were pleased, for he had a winning way, knowing how to slap a man on the back and how to flatter a woman's vanity.

When Rudik had been at the farm but a day, Iglat and Gersa were congratulating themselves that he had come. He was no trouble at all. He either kept to his own room, which looked out on Iglat's slaughter-house, or walked in the fields; and Gersa was quite free to do her work without having to think about a strange man being around.

But a strange man's presence always makes some difference to a woman. For one thing, she has to tidy herself up more. Gersa was not vain, but she naturally began to pay more attention to her appearance. At first this was a bother, and she resented the necessity; but in a little while it became almost a pleasure. It had been a long time since she had fixed up every day like this, and she had to admit to herself that her improved looks were worth the trouble.

If Rudik noticed the change he did not mention it. He was always pleasant to her, but never chummy, as he was with her husband. Every night at supper he and Iglat had a great time joking and laughing. They kept it up till long after Gersa had gone into the kitchen to wash the dishes,—two boon cronies drowned in the blue smoke from the boarder's cigarettes. Already Rudik was improving in health. He coughed less, he ate enormously, he was even getting a little color. Gersa cooked him huge steaks every day and served them almost bleeding. So far he had not drunk any blood, as he had to wait till Iglat's slaughtering day, which had been postponed on account of the farmers' delay in sending in their steers.

At last the day came, a Saturday. Iglat gave him a pail and bade him follow to the slaughter-house and get the blood warm. "Why, it almost foams like beer," jested the butcher. "It will make a man of you."

But Rudik begged to be excused. He explained quite frankly that the sight of the dying animals might sicken him; so Gersa went in his place.

She brought back the blood, warm and rich and red. Rudik grimaced, but it didn't taste so bad; just a bit salty, that was all. So he drank down a gobletful and was beginning on another when a sudden sound of harsh, hoarse groaning cries coming from the slaughter-house made him pause.

"What's that?" he asked.

"The steer Iglat is slaughtering. Sometimes they don't cry like that. The one whose blood you're drinking didn't cry. He just sighed."

His hand shook and the blood spilled out of the goblet. His face turned pale. He put down the blood and leaned against the table. The cries ceased.

"How—how does he slaughter them?" he asked.

"He cuts their throats. They must bleed to death. That makes the meat good."

The cries began again. They were louder and more terrible than before.

"But that animal is in pain!" cried Rudik. "It is being tortured. The thing is inhuman."

Gersa gazed at him in surprise. "It is nothing. They are used to it. Iglat always slaughters them that way. That's the reason your steaks are so fine."

Trembling violently, he sank upon a chair. She asked him if he was ill, if she could bring him anything. He only stopped up his ears. She brought him brandy and water. He drank greedily, then rose abruptly and went to his room.

Iglat came in with bloody hands and bloody apron. There were even spots of blood on his face. "The finest steers I've slaughtered in many a day! Where's our friend?" he asked, looking around.

She nodded toward Rudik's door. "He couldn't stand their cries. I thought he'd faint."

"What! You don't mean it!" And he burst out laughing. "What a man!"

Gersa defended him. "You forget he's sick."

"You're right, my dear. As he grows stronger he won't mind."

But Iglat was a poor prophet. The next slaughtering day Rudik was careful to be away from the farm; and the next and the next. He said he had business in the village; but Gersa knew why he was gone. So did Iglat. But the butcher did not mind. He laughed it off quietly. It was Rudik's affair anyway. He had the right to play woman if it amused him.

Gersa, though, did not join in Iglat's mirth; she could only wonder—vaguely. She had not dreamed there could be in all the world a man like this. Had he, as Iglat insisted, only a woman's heart in a man's body? Or was his sensitiveness to the suffering of animals the mark of a humanity higher than any she had ever known? She was a simple woman with little experience, and she could not make it out.

Around the house Rudik was much the same as ever. He was tirelessly gay, and his black eyes danced when Gersa brought in the steaming, bleeding, savory steaks rimmed in rich yellow fat that dripped and sputtered. The steam made a kind of aureole around her face, deep-

ening the natural rose of her plump cheeks and making the skin of her fine throat look moist and extra velvety. She was a comely looking woman thus, loaded with those wonderful steaks; and gradually Rudik's eyes ceased to dance as he gazed at her; they just widened and watched her with a strange intentness. He still talked with Iglat, but not so much as formerly. Almost anyone could have seen by the involuntary curl of his lip that he inwardly despised the butcher. Even Gersa was beginning to notice it.

On slaughtering days she always had the blood in a clean earthen jar, waiting for him when he came home. He gulped it down without looking at it, his cheeks almost as red as the fluid itself. At these times he gazed at her with eyes that glittered strangely, and once he drew so near to say some little thing that his blood-stained lips almost touched hers. She felt a smothered sensation, as though something were pressing against her heart. She was wondering in her vague way what he was about to say or do, when they were disturbed by the entrance of Iglat, who just then came in from the barnyard, bringing its odors with him.

One day the butcher did not get his slaughtering done till evening, and when Rudik came home he heard the cries of the cattle. He was much affected, and when Iglat came in from the slaughter-house he took him to task bitterly, declaring that such methods of killing the beasts were barbarous and cruel, and that the more humane way of stunning them with blows on the head should be substituted. Iglat defended himself sullenly, insisting that the animals should be bled. The quarrel developed into a furious one. Rudik, as a member of the Legislative Assembly, threatened the enactment of laws making bleeding a criminal offence. Iglat, cursing madly, was on the point of ordering him from the house, when Gersa, coming out of her burning-eyed trance, rushed at him and clapped her hands over his lips, whispering that he must not do anything foolish and that they needed the board-money. And Iglat growled himself silent.

Rudik did not drink the blood that Gersa with shaking hand offered him. "No," he said, "I can never drink it again."

Their eyes met; and again she felt that curious smothering sensation in her throat.

"I—I understand," she gasped. "I understand everything—at last."

The next day Rudik made preparations to leave. He told Gersa frankly that he would miss those surpassing steaks. "And I'll miss you, too," he added tenderly, looking into her eyes.

She never knew how it came about, but she found herself in his arms with his hot lips pressing hers. She struggled vainly. The red steaks and the redder blood had made a man of him, just as Iglat had said they would. He was strong, almost as strong as her butcher husband, it seemed to her, and quite as fiercely dominating and masculine. How wonderful is red meat! It had made a butcher. Now it had made a man.

He did not kiss her many times. His passion was only a gush quickly spent; but the experience was the supreme one of Gersa's life. It completed the work that his bitter, eloquent denunciation of Iglat had begun; it remade her, almost created her anew out of the stupid nothingness she had been. Iglat's wife was now a living woman—the old miracle.

He was to leave that evening. In the afternoon she put on her blue dress, and with flushed cheeks and sparkling eyes looked very pretty. Rudik suggested a walk in the fields. They did not fear Iglat; he never came home at this time. Besides, they meditated no harm.

To Gersa that walk was a revelation. Rudik talked as never before. He spoke touchingly of his love for dumb animals. She was enthralled, moved to tears. What a compassionate heart he had, and how beautifully, poetically, his feelings found voice! When he told her that he would see to it that Iglat's brutal methods of slaughtering should be forever abolished by law, she could have fallen at his feet. And as she listened to his burning words she felt herself being con-

sumed by the same holy passion—the passion to champion the cause of martyred brutes and to devote her life, if need be, to this great work, even as he intended to devote his.

Evening came and he bade her good-bye very simply with but one chaste kiss on the brow, just as Iglat drove up in the stained and ill-smelling meat wagon to take him to the train. She watched him from the window; she did not dare to go out to the wagon. When he had disappeared down the road, she burst into a storm of sobs and ran into his room, throwing herself on the bed and pressing mad kisses on the covers and pillow. The only light she had ever known had gone out of her life and she felt that she must die.

The next day was Saturday, Iglat's slaughtering day. At the breakfast table Gersa asked him if he intended to bleed the cattle as usual. He quickly replied in the affirmative, launching into a heated defense of his method.

"Yes," he said bitterly, "you'd have me lower the quality of my meat and lose my business and my reputation just to please that womanish fool. Enough of this nonsense; I kill my beeves my own way."

But when, later in the day, he went out to the slaughter-house, he found Gersa there petting the young steers and crying over them. He was furious at the sight; and when she snatched the sharp knife from him and handed him a huge club with which to slaughter the beasts more humanely, he lifted it as though to brain her instead; but he caught himself in time. Throwing down the club, he wrenched the knife from her, gashing her hand unintentionally; then, with a cry of rage, he turned toward the animals. Gersa, the blood spurting from her hand, picked up the club and hurled it at him, striking the back of his head; he fell to the ground like a log.

She ran to the house, threw a few articles of apparel into a satchel, took what little money she could find, climbed upon Iglat's seat in the meat cart, and drove to the station.

Gersa made the train, but had to whip the old horse unmercifully to do it.

By nightfall she was in the city. It was only the second time in her life that she had ever been in a large town, and the noise and bustle frightened her. She succeeded, however, in finding a room in a respectable house on a quiet street; and as she was very tired she slept soundly all night.

In the morning she went to see Rudik. He had given her his club address. She had supposed it was his place of business, and the sight of the servant in livery filled her with awe. When ushered into the elegant reception-room she was trembling with fear.

Rudik was very much surprised to see her and, in fact, a bit annoyed. She was a sight in her country clothes, but she looked rather pitiful for all that; and when the tears streamed from her eyes at his lack of welcome, he felt really sorry for her. Besides, she was uncommonly pretty, even in that green dress and ancient hat; so after he had glanced around furtively to see that they were not being observed, he gave her a hurried kiss. Quite by accident the kiss was implanted on her throat, her soft, beautiful throat, that throat that any woman might envy. A wave of desire swept over Rudik. He looked at her fixedly; and he made up his mind.

"My poor dear," he said tenderly; "I'm very glad to see you, but you can't blame me for being surprised."

He did not invite her to sit down. Instead, he asked her, rather confusedly, to leave at once and meet him down the street two blocks away. She went willingly. She did not blame him for asking her to do this. She felt very much out of place anyway, and she did not want to embarrass him. He was a prominent man; he had to be careful. She understood, but she was unhappy just the same. She felt that she had done a very foolish thing in coming to the city.

But later, when Rudik dashed down the street in a big motor car and picked her up and took her on a long ride past beautiful houses that looked like dream edifices to her unsophisticated eyes, she forgot

everything and was as happy as a child.

She told him frankly she never could go back to Iglat. "I've come here to testify," she said.

"Testify?" he repeated, puzzled.

"You're going to pass a law against the way Iglat slaughters his steers, and I thought maybe you'd want me to testify and swear that all you say is true. I'm willing to do that, to do anything—even to the giving of my life for our great work."

He looked at her narrowly. Was she joking? Or was she just infinitely stupid? He had known all along that she was a simple-minded creature; but this exhibition of utter childishness was staggering. His first impulse was to laugh. Then he felt irritated, aggrieved. Why had she followed him here? What was he to do with her? He frowned and was on the point of speaking sharply; but the fairness of her neck burst upon him anew,—its velvety softness, the two faint lines across the throat that lost themselves in the flesh only to emerge tentatively and untraced farther on, the golden-brown mole . . . .

So he settled everything quite promptly and simply. He installed her in a cottage in one of the quietest suburbs with a woman to look after her wants. This woman was a remarkable person. In a very short time she had almost made a lady of Gersa. She outfitted her, dressed her, polished her, taught her the art of personal grooming and all the little feminine secrets of vanity. She was absolutely trustworthy and was an adept at effacing herself. So when Rudik came to the house, which he did daily, there was nothing to try his temper and get on his nerves.

Indeed, there was much to please him. Gersa was rapidly developing into a handsome woman. Manicured, perfumed, her hair dressed becomingly, her beautiful neck and shoulders set off by soft draperies, she more than repaid him for the trouble he had taken to fit her to be his friend.

She had forgotten Iglat completely. For a time she had been afraid she might have killed him, but inquiries made by Rudik proved this fear to be groundless. The butcher, it appeared, was still living on his farm quite as usual. She had forgotten the slaughter-house as well as the slaughterer, its horrors, the inhuman bleeding of the steers, her own indignation and Rudik's, her determination to devote her life to the abolition of all forms of cruelty to animals. She never asked Rudik if he had introduced his bill in the Assembly. She felt intuitively that the subject annoyed him; and, besides, nothing in the world interested her any more but her love.

Gersa adored her lover. She worshipped him. For him alone she lived. Her life was but the realization of his presence, the anticipation of his coming, the memory of him when he had gone. She longed to do something undreamed-of for him, to work her fingers off, to go blind, to die for his dear sake. But he did not want her to do any of these divinely foolish things. All he asked was her love, her readiness to please him; and this was so little to ask, so pitifully little! The happy days and weeks went by with the flower of love forever opening petals of new delights; and Gersa's dream was as detached and scornful of reality as that of an opium-eater.

The awakening came on the night the housekeeper handed her Rudik's letter. It was only a few lines. He had been called away on important matters; he could never see her again; he was sorry; everything in the cottage was hers, also a sum of money he had left with the housekeeper. That was all.

Gersa sat with the letter in her hand throughout the night, and Iglat found her there in the morning.

Iglat! He had come at last. She looked up into his face with hollow, black-circled eyes. She was not surprised. She was not frightened. She only wondered dully—not because he had come, but because he had been so long in coming, because he did not reproach her, because he did not strike her dead. But he seemed to be meditating no harm toward her, no revenge. He was very

quiet. He looked much the same as ever. There was no new cruelty in his eyes; and somehow his terrible slaughterer's hands did not seem so big and brutal as of old. She noticed these things quite incidentally and hazily as he helped her to her feet and told her to change her dress and come with him.

She was very weak, too weak indeed, to stand alone. Iglat had to support her till the housekeeper came to lead her to her room. She was trembling violently and her hands and feet were icy cold. The housekeeper protested that she was ill and that she ought to wait awhile to gain a little strength before leaving; but she insisted on being dressed immediately.

In a little while she joined Iglat and he silently led her away.

He said no word on the journey home. Neither did she. Most of the time she leaned back with eyes closed. Her mind was almost a blank. Only three thoughts filled it, and these were hazy. Rudik had gone; Iglat had come. She was Iglat's forever to do with as he pleased. She was crushed, hence entirely submissive. She would never defy Iglat again. Nothing mattered now. Of course, she would be glad to die—if he would let her; but if he willed it otherwise she would live on. It was very simple. When Doom strikes, it strikes. That is all.

As they neared the village, she opened her eyes and looked at the master. He had not left her for an instant. His huge hot body was pressing against hers in the narrow seat. Idly she noticed his clothes. They were shockingly dirty. There were great splotches of dirt on his coat, breeches, shirt. His great heavy boots were discolored with filth; his hands were black; even his face was stained.

And now, at last, a terror that was acute seized her. What was the meaning of this change in him? For change it was, as personal cleanliness had always been one of his few virtues. Even as she wondered, she gradually became aware of the frightful, fetid odor proceeding from all this filth—a sickening, deadly smell of barnyard, pigpen, chicken-house. Why had she not noticed it before? Her numbing grief had made her oblivious of everything.

He turned and met her horrified gaze. Trembling, she shrank from him. She felt that she must rush away from this human beast; leap from the window; anything to rid her outraged senses of his utter loathsomeness; but his eyes held her, burned into her, dominated her; dominated even her new horror of him, half dispelled it. And so she became submissive again, resigned. This was part of her punishment. She had sinned. Iglat was showing her the physical counterpart of the soiling of her soul. That was it. That was all.

When they alighted at the village station she was so weak he had to carry her to the meat wagon, which was waiting. The few villagers lounging about scarcely dared to look at her, much less whisper among themselves. Everybody seemed afraid of Iglat. He lifted her to the seat, then jumped up and propped her against him.

It was a balmy September afternoon, and Iglat let the horse walk. He drove in silence for awhile, then cleared his throat and said quietly:

"Gersa, there will be only one change in our lives."

"Yes?" she managed to murmur.

He was silent again, then suddenly he took off his cap and turned the back of his head toward her. "See," he said, "there it is, the scar you made. When I rot in the grave that scar will still be on my head to rot along with my hair."

She fell to trembling. Her teeth began to chatter; she was even afraid he might hear them.

"But that is nothing," he went on. "I don't blame you for that. I don't blame you for going away with—that man." He hissed out the words and his face purpled.

She could not cry any more. But she began to moan—almost mechanically, like one who has been hopelessly sick and in pain a long time.

"No, I don't blame you for that," said Iglat with a long breath. "I don't blame you for anything. You're a woman."

She stole a look at him; but his face was quite composed again.

"You knew I loved you, Gersa; and you knew your going would drive me mad."

She did not defend herself; she only continued to moan. It seemed to her that they had arrived at the end of all things.

"Gersa," he cried, with a sudden little laugh, "your dream came true! I have never slaughtered an animal since you left; I shall never slaughter one again—even humanely. I shall never even cut meat; I shall never even eat it; nor shall you. We will get our food out of the soil. My hands are washed of blood."

She looked at the filthy fingers holding the reins and shuddered. What unheard-of torment had he in store for her?

He kept on chuckling. "Animals! I love them almost as much as I once loved you. I'm going to devote my life to them just as you said you'd devote yours. We'll devote our lives to them together. What say you, Gersa?"

She was beyond speech, even a whisper. She could only look at him with frightened eyes.

"Yes," he said, "I am a changed man. You will see what I mean when we get home. And *you* have changed me, Gersa; your faithlessness brought about the miracle. At first the new life was hard, I admit. It took me a long time to make up my mind to live it; but when once I had decided, I was off to the city at once to bring you home. At first I thought I'd have to kill *him*, torture him; aye, slaughter him, Gersa! But the Law might have got me, and that would have robbed us, you and me, of the new life!" he chuckled. "And now, Gersa, I'm a rock. I shall never change. You may get down on your knees and beg me to be the old Iglat, but I shall not change. The sun and the moon may change places, God and the Devil may change, but I shall not change." He laughed again. "See, here we are at home, our home, Gersa, the home you left but will never leave again." He helped her down from the seat. She was quite beyond walking, so he carried her toward the house, the stench from his clothes making her faint and sick.

Everything looked the same—the forbidding little stable, the more forbidding slaughter-house, the pigpen, the chicken-yard. But, strangely enough, Gersa could not see a cow, a pig, a chicken. Only the ugly hound dog welcomed them. Prodigiously fat, he was uglier than ever. An involuntary curiosity seized her.

"Where are they all?" she asked. "Have you sold them? Are they dead?"

He chuckled and shook his head. "I love them too well to sell them or kill them, Gersa. Never again shall we kill a living thing, you and I. Even vermin—the bugs, the roaches, the spiders, all the creeping and crawling things—shall live out their lives. Ah, is it not a very great change that has come over Iglat the butcher?" He bent over and kissed her, his first kiss since bringing her back. She thought she would die. She prayed she might.

As they drew nearer the house she noticed that all the windows and even the doors were open. That was odd.

"You left the house open!" she said. "Weren't you afraid everything would be stolen?"

While she spoke, a hen with her brood of chicks came clucking out of the house, followed by a fat, greasy pig. The sight sickened Gersa, struck her with a nameless terror and dread. No lion or tiger could have aroused in her this unspeakable horror. Now she began to feel the claws under the gloved revenge! She struggled to escape from Iglat's arms of steel. She bit him, scratched him, pulled his hair. He only laughed. Then she became quiet. He was master. It was written in the stars.

He took her inside the house and put her down on a chair, disturbing a rooster which had been perched there. The fowl showed fight. Iglat, amused, petted the creature.

Gersa looked around. In one corner of the room was the milch cow chewing her cud and swishing the flies with her tail. Nearby were some pigs. Chickens were everywhere.

"Welcome, Gersa," said Iglat. "The *blood-drinker* taught you to love animals. *I will teach you how to become one.*"

THE MEANNESS OF PETE JERDO

BY WILLIAM MERRIAM ROUSE

The meanest man in town tries to beat his own record for meanness, makes a new kind of record instead and has several stitches taken in a scalp wound.

PETE JERDO, using his after-supper toothpick with effectiveness and enjoyment, passed undecidedly along the main and only street of Curderville. The porch club had gathered in front of the general store and postoffice, where it would remain until the late June darkness fell. Jerdo flapped a hand in response to desultory greetings, and was about to go on when a sentence, flung out from the group, brought him to a halt.

"Want to trade watches, Pete? Trade you blind-handed!"

The sting in this sally, which brought a rib-straining roar of laughter, lay in the fact that Peter Jerdo, who proudly lived up to his reputation of being the meanest man in Curderville, recently had been beaten in a trade, for the first time in his thirty years. After carefully extracting the works from his silver watch, he had offered to trade, blind-handed, with Jumbo Warren, known to carry a solid gold case, but with a movement inferior to Peter's. Jerdo caught the glint of gold, he thought, in Warren's hand, but he found himself in possession of a dollar timepiece with a brass envelope. The worst of the matter was that Jumbo Warren, as his sobriquet indicated, was too big to thrash.

So at the laughter, Pete Jerdo, stirred to a wrath which he seldom permitted himself, faced about and walked toward the porch, scrutinizing the gathering with a canny eye. He hit upon Jimmy Grimes as the probable owner of the voice that had spoken.

"Say!" began Peter, planting himself in front of Jimmy. "Didn't they ever tell you about the time Butch Ferguson got careless with his remarks?"

Jerdo was of good size; lithe and well muscled. He saw that Grimes was beginning to squirm.

"Why, no! I didn't hear!"

"Well, I took his right ear in my teeth," Pete rolled the words out unctuously, "and I started off toward the grist mill! I been getting meaner in my disposition ever since!"

Silence followed. Jerdo was about to clinch his triumph with a few more words and pass on when, from behind a drygoods box, rose a black head and a pair of shoulders that seemed like an upheaving mountain range.

"Huh?" queried Jumbo Warren.

Jerdo had reckoned without that form behind the drygoods box. Not for a moment did he show the emotions that beset him; he waved a careless hand and turned away.

"I ain't got time to argue with elephants!" he flung back, and the chorus of laughter, this time, was tinged with admiration for a power of repartee to which there was nothing comparable in Curderville.

Pete walked on, out of the village. He was not given to evening rambles, but it would be several days before he felt like resuming his place on the store porch, after the affair of the watch, and alone he could better think how to get suitable revenge for that humiliation with, of course, safety. One plan after another broke of its own weight, and at the end of a circuitous fifteen minutes, Jerdo found himself approaching the point where the new railroad was making slow progress; still with no hint of inspiration.

Then into the path ahead of him came

Jumbo Warren, and a girl. The girl was Claribel Hodgins, daughter of Deacon Ezra Hodgins. He, keeper of the post-office, merchant princelet, enemy of the demon rum and wearer of the best whiskers in the township, was no friend to Peter Jerdo, nor to any other of the lower social half. For Curderville was divided into two classes—those who spent their evenings on the store steps and swore in public, and those who went to church and had credit.

As consciousness of these things was recalled to the mind of Pete Jerdo, inspiration followed. Jumbo Warren belonged to his own class. He would join them and spoil their stolen hour of courting; they would not dare to say or do anything for fear that he would tell Deacon Hodgins. After making them uncomfortable for an hour, he would do exactly what they feared; thus getting revenge with a kick to it. As to the aftermath, in the form of Jumbo's likely rage, Pete decided that he must take his chances. He was a good runner.

At first both regarded him with curdling looks. Then Claribel Hodgins, feeling something of the antagonism between the men, appeared to find herself amused at Warren's rumbling grunts and thunderous face. She was a dashing little chunk of a girl;—kissable, capable;—the epitome of village deliciousness. She replied to Jerdo's persiflage in kind. Thus they came to the brink of the cut where Dan McCormick's gang was blasting the new road through a shoulder of granite.

They paused involuntarily, impressed, and looked down; then the second inspiration of the evening came to Pete Jerdo. He knew that they had planned to begin working two eight-hour shifts on the road the day before, but Boss Dan had told him, on that same day, that they were held up by lack of dynamite. That this condition still held was patent from the deserted condition of the heading. With cleverness he might be able to make Jumbo Warren look like a coward to his girl.

"Kind of ticklish place," said Jerdo, allowing a little uneasiness to creep into his voice. "Like enough they's a charge of dynamite down there ready to go off any minute and shoot a lot of rocks up here and bust us full of holes."

"Goodness!" exclaimed Claribel.

"Yes," agreed Warren. "I heard they was going to work two eight-hour shifts. If they've begun, then the reason they's nobody down there now is because they're ready to blast. We better get away from here!"

That Warren had heard of the two shifts but not of the delay, played perfectly into Jerdo's hands; and the other's care for the safety of Claribel Hodgins was still greater help.

"You afraid, Jumbo?" Pete sneered.

Warren's black brows drew into a straight, ferocious, bristling line; then the devil prompted the girl.

"Why, John!" she exclaimed, speaking his little used Christian name. "I didn't suppose you was afraid of anything!"

"Me neither," agreed Jerdo, with insulting solemnity. "I didn't suppose he was. Why, I don't pretend to be a brave feller like Jumbo, but I've run out onto a log jam with a dozen sticks on the end of a pole and busted the thing up—stopped to light my pipe on the way back!"

"You go on back a little ways, John," suggested the girl, with the corners of her mouth jerking upward and little lights in her eyes. "We'll stay here and watch the rocks fly!"

"Shucks! We can do better than that!" swaggered Pete. "I'll go down to the bottom of the heading and make sure they've put a charge in."

The smouldering eyes of Warren were turned full upon him, and into them came slowly a new expression.

"Dollars to doughnuts, they ain't a stick of dynamite down there!" he cried. "They haven't run up the red flag at the end of the cut, like they would if there was a blast in. They ain't begun two shifts yet and you know it, Pete! That's why you're so reckless,—like you was trading watches!"

A shrewd guess! It brought a slightly contemptuous smile from Claribel, who, perhaps, had suspected the same thing.

Jerdo, confused, could think of but one thing to do. He swung himself over the lip of the cut and began to climb down.

"All right, then!" he called back. "If that's so, they ain't a mite of danger in playing 'round down there!"

"Come on!" cried Claribel. "Who's afraid?"

"Yes! Now who's afraid?" chorused Peter, for he saw that Jumbo Warren still remained immovable as the girl began the somewhat dangerous descent. There was no answer.

Steam drills for boring and electricity for firing had not yet come to Curderville. The drills were still hand-driven by sledges, and the old-fashioned cap and fuse fired the charge. Otherwise there would have been no time for arguments or the baiting of Jumbo Warren at the edge of the cut; and Peter Jerdo would not have stood near the bottom of the heading, with Claribel Hodgins beside him, and seen and heard the sure signals of approaching death.

For, at the moment when his mouth was full of the taste of his triumph, a chance look showed him the red flag fluttering upward down there at the end of the cut, and his ear caught the faint, snake-like hiss of a burning fuse. The fuse warned him that the blast was almost under their feet. Through suddenly filmed eyes he saw the man at the flag-pole throw up his hands in helpless warning.

The girl's face showed that she, also, had sensed the nearness of death.

"God Almighty!" Jerdo breathed at her. "Run!"

He told her that, knowing it to be useless advice. For, as the upward climb over that gashed and ledge-strewn heading met his eye, he knew that there was not one chance in a thousand that even he, with his strength for gripping hand-holds and his lithe sure-footedness, could make it. Like a cornered animal, he saw the one way out; realized it, and all the consequences of taking it, with that quickness by which thought, in moments of great stress, defies time.

Fifteen feet in front of him a big crevice had been left by some freak of former blasting. He would pretend to stumble and fall, worming himself down as far as possible; there was an even chance that he would come forth unscathed. The girl would go on, for there was no time to take her with him; perhaps no room. Her body would be beaten down by flying rocks, her flesh and bones crushed, and her life breathed out there in a breath or two. But it would not be the life of Peter Jerdo.

When these thoughts, swift as the play of summer lightning, had come and gone in the mind of Jerdo, he was halfway to his crevice. Then the foot of Claribel Hodgins went into a crack between two rocks and her little brown hands clutched upward at nothing. She sank down slowly, turning so that she faced Jerdo and the direction of the coming death. She did not shriek and implore; she did not put her hands over her face.

"Go on, Peter!" she cried. "I'm stuck good and solid!"

Pete Jerdo had intended to go on—to safety—even when he saw her body sink to rest there, over an imprisoned foot. But now he stopped involuntarily, gripped by something he did not understand, and half forgetful of the force about to be unleashed behind him.

"Game, by God!" he whispered. "Game as they make 'em!"

In that infinitesimal fraction of a second, the soul of Peter Jerdo was transformed, and he did a strange thing. He turned around and faced in the opposite direction. He felt as he did at the circus, when all the bands struck up for the grand entry. He grew big inside and it hurt with a new and pleasant pain. Then he leaped across the space that divided him from the girl and flung himself over her, sprawling out so that her struggling body was covered by his. Then, almost instantly, a great roar and a trembling filled his world. There came a fiery, star-creating blow along his scalp. The world returned to normal again, with the sound of pattering bits of rock and a taste of acrid smoke. Jerdo staggered up, and wiped blood from his face with an unsteady hand.

"Fool luck!" he muttered. "Fool luck

and Dan McCormick, only using a couple of sticks of dynamite, maybe!"

Before his eyes appeared Jumbo Warren, so white that his black hair seemed a frame of ink about his strained face.

"Save her, Lord!" Jumbo was praying much the same words, over and over again. "Oh, Lord, save her!"

The girl, sitting up, reached out her hands to him.

"What's the matter with you?" demanded Pete. "It's all over now!"

"Can't you hear the fuses?" Warren threw himself at Claribel's imprisoned foot. "The whole bottom of the heading is charged and timed a little ways apart for the blasts!"

Pete Jerdo had had his moment of reaction. Then whips of more and greater danger lashed him. His soul spun on its heel, as it were. He saw Jumbo Warren curl his thick arms around one of the boulders that held the girl's foot. Asking no help, Warren strained until the veins in his neck were ridges and his face grew dark with blood. Jerdo's soul played him another trick. Again the brass bands struck up. He, too, laid hold of the rock.

"Bit off more'n you could chaw," he grunted, "trying to heave that hunk of stone alone!"

The boulder trembled, rolled clumsily half over, and Claribel Hodgins bounded away from the trap. Pete Jerdo became drunk with the cumulative effect of his new emotions. He felt as though he were full of raw whiskey. He felt the way the minister acted at revivals. He felt like an eagle, swooping down from the highest pinnacle of Two-Bear Mountain. He swept the others—at first resisting, then understanding—down into his crevice. They lay flat, well protected; he saw that in one swift glance, and then he was bounding up the side of the heading with winged feet and certain hands. He cursed the dynamite happily, and defied it to hurt him. He was sublimated.

The blast caught him halfway up. A rock splinter ripped away one sleeve and drew a quick, red line the length of his arm. He felt nothing, and laughed. A rock the size of a waterpail struck just ahead of him and bounded away. It couldn't get him! He'd show it! He pulled himself over the edge of the cut and stood up. The third blast rose; a puff of smoke and dust shot through with soaring missles. Jerdo shook his fist at it. "I licked ye!"

Men of Dan McCormick's gang were running down the cut now. That meant that the third blast was the last. Jumbo Warren crawled out of the crevice, painfully, with his right arm hanging straight down. He put out his left to help the girl. She stood up briskly, unhurt.

Things were all right. With that knowledge Peter Jerdo became like a pricked balloon. He had gone and got himself all busted up on account of another fellow's girl—and that fellow the one who had beaten him outrageously in a trade. He became conscious that blood was trickling into one of his eyes. His scratched arm burned and twinged.

Jerdo saw Warren and the girl surrounded by workmen, with Dan McCormick's big figure in the midst. Hands waved up at him, and beckoned. He turned with a growl, and made off toward the village.

"I'll get even with Jumbo Warren for getting me all pounded up!" he muttered. "Like enough the doc'll charge a dollar to patch me up!"

So he did. When Jerdo walked out of the slowly gathering dusk into the office of Doctor Pulver, he was greeted with a snort of dislike. The old doctor, interrupted at the hour when he best loved peace and quiet, took his feet down from a chair and laid away his corncob pipe.

With ungentle fingers, he clipped and bandaged and slopped fiery liquids onto the patient's head.

"Two dollars," he said, as he fastened the last bandage, one for the work and one because it's you."

Peter Jerdo was wrathful, but he bottled himself up in order to serve a purpose that had been forming in his mind through the ordeal, and becoming stronger with each new torture invented by the physician.

"Cheap enough, Doc," he said, as he paid. "I got a favor to ask,—it ain't for

me. Claribel Hodgins was out where they're blasting for the railroad with that new black dog of hern. He got one of his forepaws broke and she wanted me to ask you, as a favor, if you'd hurry out and fix him up."

Doctor Pulver chewed a strand of his whiskers meditatively.

"Got yourself treated first, didn't you?"

"I kind of thought I was more important than the dog, Doc."

"Matter of opinion!" Doctor Pulver eyed him sharply. "I didn't know Claribel had a dog!"

"She's keeping it dark,"—Jerdo bottled his desire to chuckle,—"Deacon Hodgins don't like dogs."

That was true. The physician picked up his bag. "I'll go," he announced, "but if there's anything fishy about this, you'll hear from me young man!"

"They ain't, Doc—it's a dog" Pete spoke innocently, but the moment that Doctor Pulver had vanished, snorting, he doubled over in silent laughter.

"That makes me square for getting busted up," he whispered to himself. "All three of 'em 'll be mad enough to chew nails. Now I'll go and even up for the watch deal."

Jerdo went to his boarding place and replaced his torn coat and lost hat, pulling the latter down until it hid his bandages. Then he set out for the general store and post-office of Deacon Ezra Hodgins.

Pete Jerdo's intention was quite well settled. He was going to mysteriously beckon Deacon Hodgins into his office at the rear of the store and tell him how his cherished daughter, Claribel, was in the habit of wandering, by twilight, with Jumbo Warren. He was going to tell him how they had been so indifferent to all things but themselves that they had been caught by a blast in the railroad cut. He, Jerdo, had been in the same unfortunate predicament. The deacon needn't take his word for it. He could get the proof out there now—from Doc Pulver or any of Dan McCormick's gang.

This plan of revenge was extremely plausible, for Jerdo knew that Jumbo Warren, popular with the lower social stratum and even with Doctor Pulver, would have no difficulty in keeping the story of that evening quiet, for the sake of his sweetheart. Peter planned to start Ezra Hodgins forth in the role of raging parent just in time for him to meet a tangle of evasions from his daughter, and lies from all others concerned.

Into the lights of the general store Pete Jerdo went blinking, with the assumption of his normal swagger. He expected to hear a few hints about the watch trade before he could corner the deacon. Instead, a silence fell upon the eagerly talking group there and all faces turned toward him. He was struck still with astonishment.

Then the men pressed about him and a flock of hands approached in a semi-circle. He looked down at them wonderingly.

Limply he permitted his own hand to be seized and pumped by any and all who desired.

"You saved my daughter's life, Jerdo!" The deacon's voice creaked like a wheel that needs oiling. It jerked. "I can't never forget it! You're a hero, Jerdo!"

"I never seen a braver thing done!" That was the boom of big Dan McCormick. "Never! And I been handling men since I was knee high to a grasshopper!"

"Put her there, Pete!" Jimmy Grimes crowded into the circle. "Jumbo Warren, he says you can have anything he's got; they just took him home!"

"Peter—I owe you an apology—and two dollars!"

That, from old Doc Pulver, was too much. Jerdo felt as soft as clabbered milk. What had come over the village? A hero! He coughed and backed away.

"'Sall right!" he managed to say, backing steadily toward the door. "It wa'n't nothing!"

Then he bolted, frankly. The calls to come back died to a murmur. Peter Jerdo stopped running and turned his hot face up to the stars.

"By tripe! I've got a new reputation!" he whispered. Then he felt the lilt of the brass bands, this time in a steady, enduring roll of music. "And I guess I'll have to live up to it!"

STRICTLY PERSONAL

BY RUTH G. BOWMAN

There is the gentle rioting of Mardi Gras in this tale. A girl picks up a Carnival ball ticket in the street and with it gains entrance to a byway marked "No Thoroughfare."

MUSIC! Where? Everywhere. If you stood still it came. If you walked it followed. Laughter jostled you. Maskers mimicked you. Brothers, they are all brothers today, crowded you. Vehicles shoved you. Mirth challenged you. The gentle air persuaded you. Carnival claimed you—for it was Mardi Gras in New Orleans.

Now the hour between parades, the free lance maskers, or Mardi Gras, held full sway. A band of Mexicans charged you—annihilated you. A fairy, perchance, revived you before Mephisto snatched you. A bevy of clowns enmeshed you.

As Marie Louise Ward crossed Canal Street, she found herself, to the hilarious enjoyment of hundreds of loiterers, encircled by a company of these dotty, spotty, wriggly fellows.

She threw back her head haughtily to add to her height. She plumed herself to her full one hundred and fifteen pounds.

She all but curtained, with a deadly look, the merriment in her shining black eyes. Her shrewd captors however, had chosen their prey. "Ah, shake the fuzz," cried one; "you ain't no cattepillie—couldn't sting if you tried." "Say, little porcupine, your needles is full of sweetness," teased another. "Hasn't scratched yet," yelled a third. "Ring around a rosey—"

Spontaneously, Marie Louise joined in the laughter of the spectators. She darted hither and thither, meanwhile endeavoring to escape. "Upstairs, downstairs, 1, 2, 3," droned the clowns as they threw themselves on the pavement, keeping, however, the chain intact.

Some sport in the crowd took up the count, "4-5-6-7-8-9-10." Like a flash Marie Louise doubled her tiny fist and posed—a virile boxer. "Time," called the crowd in a breath. "Open the gates as high as the sky," sang the fair-minded Mardi Gras scrambling to their feet and already on the lookout for another victim.

Flushing and laughing, Marie Louise fled just in time to catch a car which took her to the elegant Blanchard home in the fashionable uptown district.

"Well, I have come," she announced almost reluctantly.

"You dear," cried Ina Blanchard, saluting her on each cheek without touching her lips to Marie Louise's face. "See how beautiful," she beamed, displaying a magnificent evening gown. "I am to be maid to the Queen! Have you ever been to a Carnival ball, Marie Louise?" she asked suddenly.

"No," she murmured. "I'd—I'd love—" Marie Louise's misty eyes pleaded for her.

Ina's proud glance swept the cheap, plain clothes of her tiny friend. "You would not like it," she concluded calmly. "It would be harrowing, just to sit and look."

"Oh, only to have one glimpse of it," breathed Marie Louise, leaning toward Ina, in wide-eyed anticipation.

"No," said Ina musingly, "I cannot take you this year. Perhaps next, when it will all be settled. Sometimes I am afraid of him, he looks at me so earnestly, as if he were searching—searching—for something he does not find in me. But to-night—I think—I hope he will—"

"He? Who?"

"I will not tell today, Marie Louise,—but oh, the old city is so full of love and joy and mystery!" Whereupon, dancing

about with swirling arms, she lifted Marie Louise off her feet.

"And sorrow and tears, and longing," burst out Marie Louise, disengaging herself. She buried her face in a great vase of American beauties, and a pathetic little sob plunked into the bottom of the bowl. Raising her eyes, she found her friend's face full of reproach.

"Tears, Marie Louise?" suggested Ina, brushing the guilty cheek.

"Dew," fibbed Marie Louise, smiling. "Sunshine, flowers and dew. This is a marvel," she added, as she held the rose on which the teardrop had settled comfortably and was glistening in the sunshine.

"You must take that one for yourself. You know the organization flowers will be awaiting me—I have only two arms!"

"Oh, no," pleaded Marie Louise. "It will feel sad to be with me, while its beautiful sisters are at the ball."

"You little silly, I insist upon your taking it." So saying, Ina turned once more to her glistening costume.

"You poor, beautiful dear," whispered Marie Louise, the rose close to her lips, "I christened you with sorrow. You and I must be Cinderellas together."

In mock gaiety, she left Ina. In her beloved home-city, friendless, poverty stripped her of her birthright with a chuckle. In the great, crowded merry-center, she was alone—apart.

Already masses poured into the streets. Rows of red-clad torch bearers stood ready to march. The stars shone pale above the illuminations. The high wind flung buntings and flags furiously.

On the air there burst the most happily-infectious rag-time music. It was a clarion call to Marie Louise. She dug her diminutive fist into the pocket of her heavy blanket coat, and with a philosophic shrug of her shoulders, and a Bohemian spirit, she scurried into the thick of her fellow creatures, greedily protecting the flower, as she edged in.

Comus parade rolled majestically along the palm-set avenue. Plumes waved, satins shimmered, gauzes floated. Marie Louise wormed herself to a position near the floats, in easy reach of the trinkets which her irresistible, enthusiastic applause enticed from the maskers. In mimic ecstasy, they made frantic, if distant love to her, and gesticulatingly implored her to follow them to the Opera House.

Now a wonderful float stood before her. Palm trees tottered their graceful heights to the stars, rainbow birds poised lightly on the air, tropical flowers rioted in gorgeous profusion, while maskers lolled in the most costly of elegant gauzes.

The people surged in. The torchbearers slouched nearer the man-made toy. Wind blew the burning gasoline against its drooping foliage. In a moment it was aflame. The plucky masker who sat above the blaze, beat at it insanely, with pink-gloved hands. The fire crept on.

Other maskers scrambled down from dangerous heights. Still the stubborn masker, almost hidden in tropical profusion, fought on. Smoke belched out at him. Flames darted at him. He pawed the blinding, scorching billows, and pounded with dainty, satin-slippered feet. A blue-green vapor licked his mantle and in a moment it was aflame. He tottered.

Marie Louise closed her eyes, yet nipped by excitement, she quickly popped them open. While the masker battled, her mind worked in acrobatic jerks and jumps. When he dived into the biting, suffocating bosom of fire, she darted close to the foot of the float. She tore off her coat and with the aid of one of the onlookers held it open wide. Down he pitched into its soft folds. She bundled it about him and ripped the mask from his face. His deep blue-gray eyes glinted sharply into hers. Then she was pushed aside, an atom in the crush. Men carried the sufferer into the nearest house. It was the first time in the history of the Carnival that fire-wrath had wrought havoc.

As the fun-seekers, soon unmindful of the accident hedged back into line, Marie Louise noticed a small white card at her feet. Thinking it might disclose the identity of the fire-spent masker, she hastily claimed it.

She forced her way to her boarding house and thrust the card expectantly

under the light. Searching for the name which she felt sure it must disclose, she read half-heartedly.

STRICTLY PERSONAL
*COMUS**....(313)

The card fluttered, and fell before her dresser. Lying on the floor, "STRICTLY PERSONAL," seemed to challenge her. She picked it up fearfully. For the first time it dawned on her that it was an admit card to the ball. Quiver after quiver vibrated through her body, as she fought the temptation to steal an entrance into fairyland.

Her reflection in the water-like mirror urged and enticed. The remembrance of the masker's eyes appealed. Dazed she moved about, touching the familiar objects which no longer seemed a part of her life. How long she wavered thus, she did not know, but before she realized that she had come to any decision, she was completely gowned in her best, a simple white lawn. She made no attempt to arrange her coiffure, other than to band her riotous curls. Across her shoulders she threw a crepe scarf and in her hand she carried the Cinderella American Beauty.

Her carriage was compelling, yet, when she presented the card at the Opera House, one of the reception committee demanded curtly, "How did Mademoiselle obtain this? It is a masker's card."

For the first time Marie Louise was fully aware of what she had done. She faced the committee, unable to speak or move. She grew white. She had been alive to everything that was joyous and a death blow had been given.

She noted that the ball was well advanced. She saw a masker lean interestedly from the ballroom window, and single her out as something unfit. Slowly she passed down the broad steps. The cold wind struck her shoulders and sent shivers over her body. Thankfully, she rounded the last pillar of the Opera House and escaped those boring eyes.

The committeeman hastened after Marie Louise. "Mademoiselle, pardon! It is a mistake; your card is correct. I beg—"

"It is no mistake," returned Marie Louise evenly. "I—"

"But I beg of Mademoiselle— The captain wishes you to return."

"The captain?" questioned Marie Louise fearful-eyed.

"Yes, Mademoiselle, his word is law."

Marie Louise retraced her steps. "I know now," she thought. "how it feels to face a court, a prisoner." The pallor clung about her like an illusion. She dared not raise her eyes to the captain.

"Mademoiselle," began the captain, "our beloved subject has related how you rescued him from the flames and—Comus is not ungrateful."

From beside the captain, the beloved subject, his hands and feet swathed in silken bandages, extended his hand reverently to Marie Louise. Like magic the blood rushed to her cheeks. He had touched a mystic spring that again infused her with life and joy. Gaily, but with swift intuition, he adorned her plain dress with a heavy velvet mantle from his own costume and led her into the ballroom.

A haze of mysticism veiled the fairy scene. The air was pregnant with love and joy-dreams. From the orchestra, an alluring waltz breathed over all.

"Why did you bring me back?" stammered Marie Louise.

"If I were answering the captain," he admitted, "I should say because you had saved my life, but to you—"

"To me?"

"I don't know; I had to," he acknowledged. "Ever since I opened my eyes one early spring morning to a mocking bird singing in the bushes, a crimson rambler playing a love-tattoo on my window-sill and tormenting sweetness wrapping me round about, I have been looking for the girl who made that song, a rose to match the dawn, and the delicious fragrance which is your innocence."

"Is that a part of the ball?" asked Marie Louise wonderingly. "Are they all talking like this?"

"No," he replied earnestly. "It's just a part of me—and you. You have come just in time. Do you see the girl sitting beside the king?" Marie Louise nodded.

"Discouraged in my search," he continued, "tonight I had intended to ask her to become my wife."

"Ina Blanchard?"

"You know her?"

"She is my best friend. Then it was you—"

"Your best friend, and I have never met you there? You have never been to her dinners, dances or teas?"

"I have no time to spare."

"Were you invited?"

"No," parried Marie Louise reluctantly. "She thought I would be embarrassed at not knowing her friends."

The masker laughed shortly. He looked deep into her eyes. "I have found you," he announced satisfactorily. "I do not mean to let you go." So saying he slipped a heavy gold bracelet over her hand. "You are my prisoner." Eleven—twelve—one. The hours slipped by, each moment telling of subtle intimacies which made their acquaintance ages old.

"I must go now," insisted Marie Louise, as the band struck the first strains of the farewell waltz. "Tonight has been the most wonderful of all my dream-nights, yet do not forget how I was admitted. Out into the night I must go, as I came, and leave you to Ina!"

He clasped her hand. "Your name," he begged. "You shall not go until I know where to find you again. I cannot tell mine under mask, but you shall hear from me."

"You cannot tell yours," she repeated. "'Tis well; I will not disclose mine. I shall always re—remember—but—but Ina is my best friend."

Whereupon she pressed the bracelet back into his hand and slid from him into the crush of guests winding towards the exit. Handicapped by his mask, her companion followed clumsily. Marie Louise easily concealed herself among the coats and furs of the larger women, and as she reached the stairs, she saw him return dejectedly to the ballroom.

With a roar, the medley of street noises mingled with tons of voices calling the numbers of their taxis, or autos, rent her dream into shreds. Hastening between the autos, she made a heroic effort to board the last outgoing car.

She felt a terrific jolt. The noises died away. Then a somewhat familiar voice trailed persuasively into her consciousness. "But, Ina, child, don't be so proud. It is little Marie Louise; we must take her home with us." And to the chauffeur, "Lift her in carefully. She may be badly hurt."

Marie Louise was glad to be quiet and undisturbed. The doctor had probed every inch of her body, and, according to her, had added a few black-and-blue marks to those already too numerous. The remainder of the night she wavered between the tantalizing brink of waking memories and sleeping visions.

Misgivings versus defiant gladness,—her tumbled dress, a faded rose, a heavy velvet mantle, and again memories.

Next forenoon found her ensconced in the Blanchard's sun parlor in drowsy luxury. It was a new experience to her, and now and again she buried her face in the silken coverlets.

As Ina entered, a look of startled admiration flamed upon her features and was as quickly replaced by disdain.

"Why," she demanded of Marie Louise, "were you out last night, unescorted, at such a time?"

Marie Louise winced under her scrutiny. She could not tell a half truth; she would not tell the whole truth. However, at this moment, the maid, whisking between them, handed Ina a card. With an exclamation, she hurried into the library, careless of the door which swung only partly shut behind her.

"Jean Drouet," she cried breathlessly. "I knew you would come."

"Jean—Drouet," murmured Marie Louise dreamily.

"Yes, Ina, you will pardon my calling at this hour, but it is on a matter of business."

At the vibration of the rich, full voice, Marie Louise's pulse bounded, then settled to an insinuating weakness.

"You have a friend," he continued, "who attended the ball last night. Tell me

who she is, please," he pleaded, as she drew away from him. "Did you not see me with her?"

"How should I?" she answered icily. "I was engaged with others. I did not sit with open mouth and watch you dance the evening away with a nobody."

"Then you know her? You'll help me?"

"I know her not," she defied and swung past him as though to leave the room.

"But she said you were her best friend."

"Perhaps,—charity-friend."

Marie Louise scrambled from the couch. "Charity!" She stepped toward the open door. Presently she stopped. After all, she was there through charity. Had she then a right to thrust herself between the lovers? With a helpless little whimper she crawled back to the couch and lay there, fighting a consuming tumult with the savage joyful knowledge that Ina struggled with a like torment.

"Oh, see here," he challenged, taking Ina's hand caressingly, "don't be hard on her. Haven't you heard—she saved my life?"

"Then she is the little 'beggar,' as the papers put it, who tore off her coat—"

Marie Louise writhed. "Charity! Beggar!"

"Yes," returned Jean evenly, "and I—I wish to reward her."

Ina studied his face intently. "How came she to the ball?" she questioned.

"The captain honored her. 'Comus is not ungrateful,'" he quoted dryly.

"And, of course, you had to devote yourself to her?"

Jean bent and kissed Ina's hand. "Forgive me," he begged.

"You dear," she whispered, "I knew you'd explain."

Burning to fragments the scented memories of the night before, Marie Louise wiped her eyes.

"I presume," continued Ina, "a check would answer. But you'll have to wrap it in royal language. She affects an unusual pride."

He drew out his check book.

"And to whom—" he began. His heavy breathing beat upon the silence.

"Marie Louise Ward," she announced sweetly.

"And where—"

Marie Louise pounded her diminutive fists against her breast. "A check—from *him! Mon Dieu!*"

"In—in there," said Ina. "She was knocked down—and—"

Jean Drouet rushed ruthlessly past Ina. To Marie Louise's amazement, he gathered her in his arms.

"Oh," she cried, "don't—you're hurting—hurting—hurting—"

Penitently, he lowered her to the couch, still keeping his face close to hers.

"You're hurting—Ina," she pleaded. Unheeding, he pressed his lips close to hers. The flute notes of the waltz of the previous night, the thrills of a spring-called bird signaling its mate, the rose-red of the dawn, the essence of youth-love wound about them.

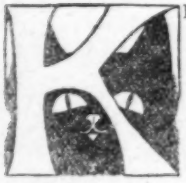
And needlessly he insisted, "You are my prisoner."

A JACK of all trades and master of none, a lovable character who surpasses all others of his ilk—that's Beatty. Read BEATTY *by Henry D. Muir.* It will be in the September number.

THE CUP ON THE NAIL

BY JOHN MATTER

A homesteader with an uneasy conscience threatens bodily injury to a guest who fails to return his drinking cup to its place on the right-hand nail over the table.



EE CAUTION was sombre and thirty, sombre as a turtle and thirty to a day. It would have taken him the whole of his birthday and five of the Seven Seas, to explain how he came to come—as he would have said — to this homestead on the Saskatchewan prairie. The desire to prosper bottomed everything. Kee Caution thought money-making a pastime, whereas the newspapers state it is an art, impure and not simple. Regardless of newspapers, the old saying that rolling stones gather no moss, holds true, of course, save for the exception, and then the rolling stone gathers everything in its path including momentum. All of which has little to do with the fact that Kee Caution would have resented the appellation of rolling stone.

Now that he was here, he wished himself there. Perhaps you will understand how poignant was this wish if you sustain an open mind and learn that Kee Caution went to bed and arose with the wish and lived with it during daylight and hugged it during darkness. It walked with him while he sought cowchips on the empty platter of prairie that outraged his sense of abundant nothingness; it sat with him while he peeled potatoes and described circumferences in biscuit dough with the top of a baking-powder can, and while he fired the stove, and while he ate potatoes and biscuits and drank chicory for coffee, and while he sat on the doorstep of the twelve by fifteen shack and simultaneously digested and gazed without binoculars straight from longitude 108 plus or minus, latitude 50 more or less, Saskatchewan, into the main street of Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania. There he saw the store front of the Punxsutawney Hardware Company wherein he had clerked before the heresy that money-making is a pastime had seized upon him and rolled him round the fourteen corners of the earth.

After Kee Caution had done with admiration of the concrete block front of the Punxsutawney Hardware Company—the shift of a cloud shadow at large upon the land, or the squeak of a gopher at home before a hole, generally fetched him from Pennsylvania—he would sigh and enter the twelve by fifteen shack and wash the dishes. In your eyes, perhaps, the utensils might not have justified his ecstasy in their cleansing.

After the manner of an inventory, they consisted of: one skillet, one coffee pot, one pint tin pail used as one cup and saucer, one knife and one fork, one large spoon, one small spoon, one tin plate, and one tin cup. The tin plate he finally bestowed, along with all the utensils save one, in the box under the bed. The tin cup he washed and rubbed with superior zeal, although there was, liberally speaking, necessity for neither, as the cup was never used except for quaffing water from the pail beside the door, and the law, as yet at least, does not require sanitary drinking cups on homesteads.

Above the table, wrought along with the bed and chair from the waste of the lumber that had been fashioned into the house, were two nails driven into the wall. Kee Caution always hung the tin cup on the nail to the right. Unfailingly he took from beneath the grain-sack pillow upon the bed, a revolver, calibre forty-five, and fondled the weapon. Sometimes he addressed it by profane endearing

names such as— well, no matter. Often he wondered how it would feel to close down his teeth on the slim, blued barrel and touch a forefinger under the trigger guard. It would have been several days before an indifferent public could have the result. He was sixty miles from the nearest telegraph wire.

As Kee Caution sat on the doorstep at noon of his thirtieth birthday, he beheld a moving slur nicking the slope across the coulee. His first thought was of a coyote, one of the breed that rendered painful his nights by prolonged expression of the conviction that the world is lugubrious; but when the slur paused and flung a jet of arm against the sky, he realized that unmistakably he saw a man. He had seen no man for a longer time than he cared to determine, and now he squirmed with anticipation. He made no move beyond squirms and one glance within doors to ascertain if the cup was on the nail to the right. The slur slithered down the slope and was lost below the vision line. When it wavered up the nearer bank, it was a man with two legs and two arms and a head.

The stranger halted ten feet from the doorstep and pushed back the black felt hat which shaded his eyes. He was a sprig of a man who would weigh one-half of Kee Caution's pounds; but then, one never can gauge the quality of an arrival by his quantity.

"Mornin'," vouchsafed this arrival.

"Mornin'."

"A Yankee, ain't you?" The newcomer's eyes were flitting like swallows about the man on the doorstep. "What part of God's country do you hail from?"

"Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania. I wish I was there. I'd show 'em how to sell hardware."

"I bet you would all right. I can tell that to look at you. Got any drinkin' water?"

"Pail beside the door," replied Kee Caution, making way on the step for the stranger to pass. "Tin cup on the nail above the table. I always keep that tin cup hangin' on the nail to the right."

The man nodded and entered the one room of the shack. Kee Caution heard him take down the cup and plunge it into the pail, then he heard the gulp and sigh of thirst satisfied. A moment later he arose and entered. The tin cup was on the table, and the stranger was wiping his mouth with the back of his hand.

"That touched the identical spot. It's hot walkin', and this late in August—"

"I said I always kept that tin cup hangin' on the nail to the right."

"You sure did, and that's where I found it. I didn't drink out of the bucket, though that would have been no hardship."

"I said I always kept—"

"I heard you. My hearin' is tolerable good, partner."

Kee Caution clenched his fists and the flesh on the rim of his jaws whitened. The other man was eyeing the contents of the house.

"I keep things where they belong," muttered Kee Caution, returning the tin cup to the right-hand nail.

"Should remark that you do. But you ain't ahold of so much that it would take you all day to keep it where it belongs. Such is homesteadin'. Looks to me that it would take the hide off for the first year or so. But I don't care. I don't know how to spell worry and I'm willin' to join the noble ranks of homesteaders. Fact is, the doctor told me to try it. Said I needed fresh air. You ain't acquainted with any good half sections nearby, layin' open and pinin' for a proprietor, are you?"

"Land is pretty well taken up 'round here," said Kee Caution, seating himself on the bed, while his guest selected the chair; "pretty well taken up."

"Hadn't seen a house for four miles till I struck your place. So far as I can tell the country ain't over-populated."

"Five miles to the nearest house," replied the host. "But that signifies nothin'. The land is filed on; least the fit land is. You can have the coulee gumbo; my land is all on the bench. The lads who filed are out threshin' to earn money to build with this fall. I'll have shacks all around me inside two months. Won't be so lonesome, then. I ain't seen a man in

three weeks, but I can see all the way to Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania."

"Great rattlers and little snakes! I'd hate to see that far."

The stranger glanced at the other hard for a second, then watched him from the shelter of a hand spread over his eyes as he asked, "What do you see? It must be worth lookin' at or you wouldn't travel so far."

"The Punxsutawney Hardware Company. I sure can sell hardware."

"I bet you can. When I'm ready to buy my farmin' outfit, I'll remember you. Got any outfit of your own?"

"No, not yet. That is, no outfit right here, but I've been thinkin' 'bout it and I have it all thought out as to just what I want. And what's more, I know just what I'm going to get."

"You see," continued Kee Caution, withdrawing his gaze from Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania, and glancing at the tin cup on the right-hand nail, "I come in here last May with a couple of hundred in my jeans. I located this half section and walked back to town and filed. Bought a load of lumber and some grub and started back here. Paid the teamster forty good dollars to haul my load out. Been here ever since. I'm goin' to put in my first six months' residence duty and then I'm goin' to Punxsutawney for six months. I'll show 'em how to sell hardware. Goin' to work on a commission basis, I am. Just give me a commission, and that's all I ask; and in the spring I'll show homesteaders how to raise wheat. I'll come in with a team of horses, a yoke of oxen, a milk cow, forty chickens, a brood sow, and a complete outfit of farmin' machinery. I sure can sell hardware."

"My last doubt is gone. But in the meantime I'd have to work like killin' snakes if I was in your shoes. Don't the neighbors ever come 'round?"

"Nearest neighbor is five miles off, as I told you, and he don't believe in visitin'. No, the neighbors don't bother me and I don't pester them. I've got lots to do. It takes time to do all my fancyin'."

"You said somethin' then. Don't you ever have queer notions, performin' all that fancyin'?" The stranger glanced quickly at his host; and then as quickly out of the window when the other turned to face him.

"Other people has queer notions," replied Kee Caution. "I can't say that I ever has any. What for would I be havin' queer notions?"

"From livin' alone on this hulk of a prairie that won't talk to you. It would make the bats buzz in my belfry. I don't know whether I was cut out to be a homesteader. What do you think?"

"Some people has queer notions, all right. Some people thinks a tin cup ought to hang on the left-hand nail; I've noticed that. A tin cup ought to hang on the right-hand nail. Anybody knows that."

"You said somethin' again, partner. The right-hand nail it is," agreed the other heartily.

"What's your name?" asked Kee Caution.

His guest paused for the half of a second, as though he were endeavoring to recall the date of the discovery of America. Kee Caution was considering whether his commission on hardware sales that winter should be five or ten per cent, and did not notice the pause. Indeed, the other might have halted the whole second without remark, for the advisability of compromising on seven and one-half per cent in case of a deadlock was engrossing the host.

"Hendershot."

"What?"

"Hendershot; Albert Hendershot."

"I thought you said somebody got shot. I was thinkin' of somethin' else. Hendershot; that's a funny name." The host spoke absently, and so did not witness the gleam that blazed and died like flashlights in the eyes of the man across the room. The man hitched in his chair, and one hand came out of his pocket like a ferret.

"What's your name?" he asked.

"Kee Caution. Some folks used to think that was a funny name. I ain't responsible for my name. Anyway, I sure can sell hardware."

"I ain't disputatious, but I might be tempted. Can you do anything else?"

"Bake biscuits. How would you like a batch of biscuits? I used to put so much sody in 'em it was hard on the kidneys, but I've got it down to a hair now."

"I bet you have," agreed Hendershot.

"I bet you have it down to the shadow of a hair. I'll rustle a pail of water for you, old-timer, while you start mixin' up the dough. Here's the pail; where's the water?"

"Go along the top of the coulee till you see some green grass runnin' up the side. The spring's just at the tip of the grass. I've dug it out some. You'll find it all right. I always dip out a pail first. It sort of keeps the spring sweet. I'll have the fire goin' and the flour mixin' by the time you get back."

Albert Hendershot bore away the pail and whistled as he went. Before he descended the coulee bank he ceased whistling and slowly looked around the prairie. There was no sign of moving life, no trace of man or beast in all that solemn immensity. "I thought you said somebody got shot," he repeated, under his breath, and wiped his forehead. The act was unnecessary, for he was not perspiring. He filled the pail at the spring and returned to the house, resuming his whistling as he topped the coulee bank.

"Whistlin' is considerable comfort," volunteered Kee Caution; "but I was never much at it. My tongue gets tangled in the notes and I fizzle like a popcock." He smiled for the first time that day and poured a little water into the pan of dough on the the table.

"Say, fellow," as he punctiliously replaced the tin cup on the right-hand nail, "do you like strawberry or raspberry jam the best?"

"Strawberry for me."

The host dusted off his palms and seized the right hand of his guest. "And you're the galoot for me!" he cried. "Strawberry! That's the word." From a shelf behind the door he produced two jars. The one was labelled "Strawberry Jam," the other, "Raspberry Jam." He placed the two jars side by side upon the table. "Many's the time," he continued, "I've had them two out and looked 'em over. I never could tell proper which one to open first. Fetched 'em both from town, I did, on my load of lumber, and they've been heaps of company to me. It was perplexin' to tell which to open first. See how those strawberries in there are red and enticin'? I'd ponder over them, and then I'd ponder over those raspberries. See how tantalizin' they are? They make your mouth feel like an artesian well. I couldn't tell which jar to tackle when the time came. One is for my birthday, which is today, and the other is for the day that I start to Punxsutawney. Now I know it was the strawberries I hankered for all along. You has a way of puttin' a man right."

They dined on biscuits and strawberry jam, potatoes and the distant relative of coffee called chicory. The host insisted that the guest monopolize the cutlery and the tin cup. For himself, he elected fingers and the pint tin pail. When the last strawberry had disappeared on the last biscuit, the men leaned back and smacked their lips.

"A Mounted Police told me a circus was comin' to town," said Kee Caution. "I ain't seen a circus in three years."

"Neither have I," replied Hendershot, slowly dropping his eyelids. "I'd like to see a circus. I like to watch the clowns."

"That Mounted Police told me a fellow who saw this circus in Calgary told him the clowns was the best he ever did see. Two of 'em has a sham shootin' duel. I'd like to see 'em."

"So would I," agreed Hendershot. His eyelids slowly raised. "I'd like to see the one that does the shootin'." He glanced swiftly at his host, who was looking into the empty jar as though he expected a new crop of strawberries to spring into jam therein. "What do you say we wash the dishes?"

"I'll wash and you wipe," said Kee Caution. "I wouldn't let nobody wipe those dishes 'cept a man who had told me that strawberry jam is better'n raspberry."

When the utensils had been washed and dried, the stranger neglected to hang the tin cup on the right-hand nail. He left

it on the table. Kee Caution whirled with a snarl.

"What's troublin' you?" asked Hendershot.

"I've told you once and I'm tellin' you twice to hang that tin cup on the right-hand nail. The next time I won't tell you."

"Whoa, take it easy, ol' hoss. Don't jangle up the traces. I'm willin' to oblige. It's your housekeepin', not mine. I'll hang that tin cup 'round your neck, if you say the word."

"Hang it on the nail where it belongs."

"There it is, all safe and sound and no damage done, on the right-hand nail."

Kee Caution's face softened. "I didn't mean to whang the dashboard to pieces," he said. "Livin' alone sort of gets me, sometimes. No harm meant."

"That's all right; no harm done," replied Hendershot. "I bet livin' alone would give me the jumps proper. I'd hate to live on this prairie with just an uneasy conscience for company."

"I don't believe in consciences, easy or uneasy."

"Well, if I had killed a man, for instance, or even thought I had, I wouldn't want to live on this prairie alone."

"You wouldn't, eh? Why, if you had a backbone, you could live here alone if you had killed a dozen men."

"Not if I had killed a dozen," Hendershot answered. "I couldn't stand it then." His hand was spread over his eyes and he was studying intently his host's face. Maybe I wouldn't mind so much if I'd just killed one man."

Kee Caution yawned and stretched. "Think I'll rest a while," he mumbled, and went to the bed. He flung himself down and thrust his arms beneath the pillow. "I'm gettin' sleepy."

"Funny how thirsty I keep gettin'," said Hendershot. "Do you suppose it's the sody in the biscuits?" He reached for the tin cup and dipped a drink from the pail. Then he hung the cup on the left-hand nail. When he turned, he gazed into the bore of his host's revolver, calibre forty-five.

There was a silence in the shack for fifty-nine seconds that endured like fifty-nine hours. Hendershot continued to plumb the interior of the slim, blued barrel. "More hardware," he murmured.

"Put that tin cup on the right-hand nail where it belongs," commanded Kee.

"Certainly. There it is, on the right-hand nail, right side up with care. Do you want to sell that piece of hardware you show in your fist?"

"Not for sale. I'll give you free gratis for nothin', a chunk of lead if you want it."

"Thanks, no. I would be worried 'bout lead poisonin'." Hendershot sat himself on the chair. The motion hitched free his right hip pocket. "Let's talk this here misunderstandin' over. I was enjoyin' myself till you begun displayin' hardware samples. This ain't the Punxsutawney Hardware Company in Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania."

"There's nothin' to talk over save whether I make a lead mine of your heart or of your gizzard."

"Help yourself. That don't interest me."

"It does me. I'll think 'bout it for a spell. You set still on that chair."

"Of course," replied Hendershot. "You don't mind if I play cards while you do your spell of fancyin'? There's a deck in my outside coat pocket."

"Take it out."

Hendershot produced the playing cards and began dealing poker hands on the table himself and to an imaginary opponent. "Ever play poker?" he inquired, casually, when his opponent had bested him three times running.

"I'm the man who invented cards," replied Kee Caution, raising himself on his left elbow and continuing to level the slim, blued barrel. "What did you bust that two pair and draw three cards for?"

"What for? The ways of men are beyond comprehension. Just 'cause I had a hunch. See that? Caught a jack, I did. Was it a pretty hunch? Somethin' tells me it was. Do three jacks beat a pair of nines and a pair of deuces? My lawyer informs me they do. And that's for why, bucko, I busted two pair." He

shuffled the pack and dealt new hands. "So you are the man who invented cards? Come to think of it, I invented draw poker, if that's any comfort to you on cold and stormy nights. Somethin' tells me I'm the better man in the practise of my invention."

Kee Caution slid his feet over the edge of the bed. "Somethin' whispers to me you howl like a jabberin' mule," he retorted. "Deal a hand on the table and a hand on the bed."

"What stakes? I never play for my health."

"You're playin' for your health this time, stranger," said Kee Caution. "If you win this hand you go whole hide out the door and on your way where you desire; if you lose, you go dead and on your way where you deserve."

"One hand tells the tale, and I deal?"

"Why more? I can play poker most as well as I can sell hardware, and I sure—"

"Say no more. Already I perceive it is next door to useless for me to go against you. Howsomever, I'm your company and that's a powerful argument. We're off!"

Hendershot dealt the cards slowly and methodically. He smiled to himself and hummed under his breath. Kee Caution scowled and continued to aim the revolver.

"Everybody kindly keep their fists off the pasteboards until I'm through," murmured Hendershot. "Now, there we are. Five cards in a row, face down on the bed, and five cards in a row, face down on the table,—two poker hands. You think you're a sport, don't you?" he continued, smiling at his host. "All right. Lay that piece of hardware on the floor between us. I'll turn up one card, and you turn up one card. High card wins and takes the gun."

"Let me point out the card for you to turn?" asked Kee Caution. "You ain't sport enough for that."

Hendershot wetted his lips. "I'm sport enough for that," he answered.

Kee Caution placed the revolver on the floor equidistance from their feet. "I'll go first," he said, and turned a king. He paused and looked into the other man's face. "Is the gun mine again?"

"Not yet," replied Hendershot calmly. "Point out the card for me to turn."

"Turn that one."

"I'm a dead game sport. You can turn it for me."

Kee Caution leaned over the table and studied the backs of the cards. One of his feet edged toward the revolver deposited on the floor. "This one," he decided, and turned an ace.

The strategy of the foot was wasted effort, for as the ace showed face up, a revolver that sped from Hendershot's right hip pocket was pressed into Kee Caution's temple.

"You're Kee Caution, alias Swift Founds, alias Gifford the Clown, who shot his teammate last week!" cried Hendershot.

"Think so?"

"I know so!"

"How do you know?"

"Many's the time I've watched your duel act in the show. Hm! That was good business just now 'bout the cup on the nail. I've heard of homesteaders who lived alone gettin' fussy like that over housekeepin'. Good business, that was. But you played it too strong. You wouldn't have give me a chunk of lead free gratis for nothin'. You was just tryin' to shoo me off."

"Think so? Who are you?"

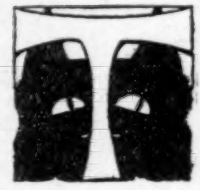
"Me? Oh, I'm only a card shark that followed the show. They run me out of the next town we played after you let daylight into your partner. They said my work was raw. Maybe so, but there's five kings on that bed and five aces on this table. Hm! I wonder where's the owner of these diggin's?"

"Present," said an amused voice from the open doorway. They looked up to behold a sunburned son of the prairie covering them with the ample muzzle of a ten-gauge shotgun.

TEA AND TOAST

BY EARL G. CURTIS

When a man with a good appetite and no superfluous flesh switches to tea and toast and becomes a life member of the diet squad, he must be concerned with something more than a slight attack of indigestion.



THE afternoon train from the South slid under the cavernous shed of Main Street station and came to a stop, blowing as if by its long run. Scurrying folks, with all fashions of luggage, swarmed from the coaches and trouped in disordered array toward the outlet.

Though his coming had not been heralded by any extra edition of the daily papers, Richmond Ed was home again. He adroitly eased himself from his perch behind the engine tender, and though his cinder-seared face proved beyond a doubt that he rode no Pullman, he mingled with the crowd. As a mingler, Ed was in a class by himself. He was on the outer edge of a closely packed group when he passed the guard at the gate.

Ed was homely, in a hurry, and hungry. With no hesitation, he sought Main Street, walked east past Old Market, and turned up Seventeenth. A minute later he entered Wander Inn.

Sloker himself, with moon face beaming, welcomed his partner. For years he and Ed had sought—and had found—peculiar adventures in peculiar places. Six months previous the pair had, as they fondly imagined, forsaken the open road. They were wayworn, surfeited with their hand-to-mouth existence—they wanted to know *exactly* where the next meal was coming from. Hence, the Wander Inn, controlled by them jointly.

For a short time the domesticated pair were contented, and the cheap little lodging house thrived. Then came the call of the wide outdoors, and their feet began to tingle with restlessness.

They talked the matter over calmly, as business men should. While they would go a-wandering, the idea of giving up the Inn was extremely distasteful. It would, in a manner, satisfy their newborn homing instinct to have a place to start from—a place to come back to. Ed was the one who suggested the way out.

No more would they adventure together. Turn and turn about, one would stay and attend to business while the other wandered, until the call of the fireside lured him in. They had matched coins, and an hour later Sloker was in full charge of the hostelry.

Ed wasted no time in selecting a table that faced the street. He was interested in people; aside from that there are occasions when it does no great harm to scan the faces of passersby. Sloker spoke.

"Which way you been, Ed?"

"South."

'What're you eatin'? Fried chicken, oysters as you like 'em, corn beef an' cabbage—"

"Bring me some tea an' toast," Ed interrupted grouchily.

"Tea an'—what th' devil!"

"Tea an' toast," Ed stolidly repeated.

"Tea—"

"Listen here, Sloker!" Ed's fist emphatically thumped the table. "I said tea an' toast. D'you want me to spell 'em? Sloker, most ever' man has his weakness. Some is weak in their hands, some in their feet an' some—" he paused and stared insultingly at Sloker—"some is weak in their head. Get me th' tea an' toast."

A few minutes later, Sloker sat across the table from Ed, the tea and toast between them.

"What's wrong with your pantry, Ed?"

Sloker politely inquired. "Is it goin' back on you?"

"Naw, it's already went," Ed answered, deep scorn in his tones. "It's almost ruint me. I *might* be able to hold down a job washin' dishes; my only weakness, too. My headwork is O. K., my footwork is clever enough, an' my conscience don't trouble me over much. But—I sure have got one weak sister of a stomach!

"When I left the Inn I beat it South, travellin' light an' easy, an' livin' lordly, down to Mobile, an' hit th' back trail up through Savannah, Charleston an' prosperous points between. Two months ago —July—I found myself in Greensboro. Th' heat must 'ave got me, for one night I bedded down in a box car what I thought sure was headed North, an' next mornin' I woke up in a village entitled Mount Crag. Way up in th' mountings of old N. C. it is.

"When I found out where I'd landed, I was sore as a mashed thumb, but before th' day was gone I was extendin' to myself sincere congrats. July up there is fine—cool an' breezy. The North Pole couldn't 'ave suited me no better.

"Five miles out from th' mounting burg is a big granite quarry, where they're busy as a hound with a ham bone,—two-three hundred stone-cutters on th' job. I meandered out there to give th' plant th' onct-over, an' the supe spied me an' hired me. Bein' as I sized up big an' brutal, he signed me up as night watchman at th' cutters' shed. So far's I could see, there was nothin' there to steal, outside of monster big rocks that Sampson hisself couldn't 'ave used in his slung shot.

"I tackled th' job mostly to feel how it felt to be workin', an' soon I was settled at a boardin'-house up th' hill across from th' shed, nice an' convenient to th' job. A gang of us, mostly cutters, slept in a shack 'bout thirty yards from th' main house, where we et. There we was cozy as a sewin' circle on a summer veranda. All except dinner I et with th' rest of 'em. Just before I went on duty, I et with 'em at supper, an' when I come off duty, I et with 'em at breakfast. An' Sloker, when I say I et—I mean I et! That air up there sure man'factures a appetite.

"Me an' a cutter—a sour-faced guy name Ferry—we slept in th' same bed, he messin' th' covers up at night, me doin' th' same stunt in th' daytime. I sure liked my job. I punched a clock onct an hour when on duty an' that's all. Th' wasn't much danger of me neglectin' my work for I got me a blanket an' spread it right under the old key-winder. All was serene for 'bout a month.

"Last week th' Ferry guy an' a little Eyetalian named Mario got in a fight. They was two misers an' they didn't love each other th' least bit. It appeared that Ferry wore a money belt next to his skin. It also seemed that ever' two weeks he'd make room for another twenty in th' belt, an' he'd been doin' that same economical stunt ever since he'd been on th' job—two years. Figure it up yourself, Sloker. He didn't have no more affection for banks than I have for bars—iron bars, I mean.

"Th' Eyetalian was th' same kind of fish; th' only difference bein' he put his money in th' town bank. Neither of 'em had ever been known to spend so much as a jitney, outside of their board, an' that had to be dunned outer 'em. You couldn't rightly say they was impulsive with their coin.

"Th' fellers got to kiddin' 'em 'bout who was th' last what had spent a jit. They got to quarrelin' over it, an' ever'-body egged 'em on,—not that they needed much eggin'. Th' Eyetalian fought mostly with his mouth, while Ferry fought American style, an' you can easy guess which one wore th' laurel crown of vict'ry when we pulled Ferry offen Mario. The dago spit blood, cussed in sunny It., an' swore in crutch English that he'd get even.

"Yep, I liked that job, Sloker. But somethin' happened that made me resign. Two mornin's ago, after th' battle of mouth an' mits, I come off duty an' found a crazy man at th' shack. It was Ferry. From what I could find out, he had come back from his land of dreams—which was a mint, I reckon—an' found that somebody had stole his money-belt from round his waist. That's th' reason he looked like

all th' joy had passed outer his life; an' it served him right at that, for arousing th' cupidity of his feller-man. A guy oughtn't to like th' feel of money so.

"When I got there Ferry had finished searchin' ever'body what had slept in th' shack, an' hadn't found a single twenty that he could reco'nize. He knowed all of his'n by their first name. Then he recollected that th' little Eyetalian had swore to be even for th' lickin' he had got, an' Ferry ast that he should be hung till he told where th' money was hid. The fellers compromised by lockin' Mario in a outhouse to keep him till th' sheriff come.

"After breakfast, ever'body but me an' Mario an' Ferry, went to work. Between th' one squealin' an' th' other cussin', there wa'n't no sleep for th' weary. Things kinder boiled down. Ferry quit cussin' long enough to tell me that he was goin' into Mount Crag an' get th' sheriff.

"That information put th' thoughts of beatin' it into my bean. You know, Sloker, I'm a miserable guy when a fly cop comes pokin' round. I would 'ave beat it right then, but they might 'ave thought I was mixed up with Mario, an' 'twould 'ave made me sore to think that th' fellers might cuss th' mem'ry of me.

"I felt right better when Ferry come back an' told me that th' sheriff was in th' mountings gunnin' some whiskey man'facturers an' wouldn't be able to get to th' shack till next mornin'. Right then I made up my mind to flit. When I went over to th' shed that night, I'd punch that clock onct for old lang sine an' keep on goin'.

"Th' plant whistle blowed quits for th' cutters, an' th' gang went up to supper. Me—not knowin' when mealtime would come round again for Edwatd—I made up my mind to eat all I could hold. I did. When I left th' table I felt like a frog full of buckshot.

"I ambled 'cross to th' shed, as careless-like as usual an' punched th' clock. 'Good-bye, faithful companion,' I said. 'We've spent many a lonesome hour together. Be good to yourself.' I rolled up my blanket an' fumbled round a bit, an' then my stomach went back on me—its only friend.

"Somethin' caught holt of my insides an' twisted 'em this way an' that. Then they was run through a grinder, slow an' agonizin'. It hurt me terribly awful, Sloker. 'Twasn't one of your teeny-weeny pains, but a reg'lar old he-ache. 'Twas Saint Viters dance, two scrappin' tom-cats, an' a active volcano, all doin' a movin' picture stunt in one stomach. I reeled. I took my stomach in my arms like it was a long-lost child, an' tried to soothe it an' make no noise at th' same time. 'Twas no go. I set down an' hugged it to me tight—an' hollered!

"Yep, old pal, I admit it without a blush. I hollered, an' hollered loud! Purty quick I heard somebody runnin', an' most all th' gang what slept at th' shack come up an' ast me what's the matter, an' who'd tried to murder me. I couldn't tell 'em. I hugged my stomach tighter an' hollered louder.

"They took me up an' carried me over to th' shack an' put me in my little bed. I seen Ferry look black at me, but I couldn't be bothered. My stomach hurt. I was still howlin' like a calliope outer tune when one of th' gang thought up a bright idea.

"'Cholerum infantum,' he said.

"'You mean cholerum morbus,' another said.

"'Hot rags is good,' two-three of 'em put in at th' same time.

"With that, some of 'em made a dash for th' kitchen, an' when it come to me what they was up to, I made a dash for th' door. They caught me, an' though I fought 'em as nasty as I could, they put me back to bed. I tried my best to throw 'em offen me. I didn't want no hot rags on *my* stomach. But what I didn't want was just th' same as what a dog with a tin can on his tail don't want. They knew I orter have hot rags an' I was goner get hot rags.

"Th' angels of mercy come back with a armful of rags that steamed like a boiler had busted, an' while ten-twenty of 'em helt me down, one of 'em selected hisself as my valay an' unloosened my clothes.

"Th' guy what was doin' th' disrobin' act let out a whoop of surprise what must

'ave been heard clean to Mountain Crag. Th' Ferry person was standin' by, lookin' as cheerful as a funeral in the rain. He had been takin' no part whatever in my examination, prescribation, an' administration. He was neutral; in other words, he was sick hisself. But when my valay yelled, he come over to me an' give th' exposed part of my person the onct-over. *Then* he leaned over an' unbuckled his money-belt from round th' waist of—yours truly. I felt as hot an' outer place as a flea on a flatiron."

"Tough luck," Sloker said.

"It was. I didn't mind 'bout th' money part of it, Sloker. I didn't need it particular. I copped it mostly to let that Ferry fish see what a sin it is to tempt his feller-man. They are all weak.

"They turned Mario loose an' a'journed outside to talk things over. I was discussed an' disgusted. While they was takin' a vote whether to hang me or just turn me over to th' sheriff, I sneaked through a side window, an' I never even buttoned up my clothes till I was five miles away from there. For a little while I was so sore I forgot I ever had a ache. However, my organs of indigestion soon reminded me. I dragged myself over 'bout twenty mountings till I hit a water tank."

"Tough luck," Sloker remarked.

"It was. Like I said before, most ever' man has his own peculiar weakness. Ferry's is th' feel of his money—mine's my stomach. It acted unfriendly, an' I'm goner treat it th' same way. Right now it's just yearning for corn beef an' cabbage. But it went back on me—its only friend. It'll never do *that* again. Sloker, bring me another order of tea an' toast."

THE second story in the series relating the alternate adventures of Richmond Ed and Sloker, the pardners of Wander Inn, will appear in the September number. Look for THE NERVE OF TIMID THOMPSON *by Earl G. Curtis.*

CONSERVATIVE SAM

BY HENRY FRANCIS DRYDEN

An investment in Liberty Bonds was a little too conservative for the character in the title role of this story. He preferred a flyer in certain municipal sixes of doubtful parentage.

N UNDERSIZED, rat-faced man, appeared in Barkley the first of June and having through Sam P. Ross rented a tiny apartment on Shay Avenue, with a sleeping-deck and kitchenette, he started canvassing the offices with his line of stationery, loose-leaf binders and samples of lithographing and engraving.

For a month he drummed the business section regularly, from Mondays to Saturdays, calling many times at every bank, hotel and store in town and making the acquaintance of only unprofitable people.

During the month, he had taken orders for a few sales which invoiced less than his own board bill. The profit was not large. It had been so for almost a month, and now the business—to him—held no promise for the future. He packed the samples of engraving and lithographing, loose-leaf binders and stationery in his leather bag when he returned to his quarters. He then started for the office of Sam. P. Ross. Many conversations with the conscienceless Mr. Ross had convinced the rat-faced man that Sam. P. was now a "prospect" for another line of endeavor.

Mr. Ross's office was on a vacant corner lot on Shay Avenue. It was a portable shell, of corrugated iron, which might be taken apart and removed to some other location, with neatness and dispatch. A wide board inside, from wall to wall, made a counter. His furniture consisted of one stool and a redwood cabinet, stuffed with papers. On the day of his arrival, the rat-faced man had included Mr. Ross's office in his canvass—with no profitable results—but he had continued to call in undismayed persistence. Sociability was the undersized man's forte, so his manner had become more or less familiar. Today he took Ross into his confidence, as he leaned across the board counter and began:

"I'm a sucker, Sam. I ought to go after the big money. I wanted to play fair when I came here; and I'd do it now if this dump you call home offered any premiums for honesty. I used to think: 'You can sell *some* of anything!'—for you do see houses manufacturing a lot of useless junk and getting rid of it; but stationery—" He straightened up and glared so that his beady eyes made him look more rat-faced than ever. "By George! it's worse than trying to sell Ferris-wheels. But maybe I haven't got salesman's magnetism."

He lolled across the counter and seemed to make a mental estimate of his listener, fanning himself the while with a sailor hat of closely woven straw. A gray tweed suit accentuated his youthful outlines. His voice was high and whining, cutting the silence of the little room, except when he paused to puff vigorously at a fat cigar.

"Here's a proposition, Sam," he continued, extending an index finger: "I can dig up some bonds—phoney—but bonds. I've got the plates in my grip, made 'em myself. Bonds look good to all conservative people, especially bankers. I might offer to sell some of them, but that's a stale chestnut. Nobody wants to buy any green-goods. That game has been worked to a frazzle. But a banker will jump at a collection, or a loan when it's secured by bonds, if you offer him a one-day note at eight per cent and sign his collateral agreement." He cocked the sailor on one side of his head.

"Now I'm a failure on the straight and narrow, Sam. I've traveled that path here for a month and I almost owe myself money; haven't made the eats as a salesman. It's a hard grind! Now you real-estate sharks sit around doing nothing for six months; then some grocer decides that he wants to be a farmer, and some rube thinks he'd be happier as a grocery-man. They swap—and you take five per cent from each of them. It's pretty soft, eh? Nothing to do for another six months! That's *your* graft!"

He ducked through the door and read the sign: "ROSS—REAL ESTATE." "But I never had time to get established in that kind of a game. I went to Chicago when I was a kid and took a job in a machine factory. After a while I could assemble either a cash-register or an adding machine with the parts, and make 'em add, too! Then I went out on the road as a repairman—handling the service department for different agents, wherever the company sent me. It was lots of fun getting acquainted with the bartenders and the chorus-girls nights, and talking shop to bookkeepers all day, but I quit to go to work for a lithographing and engraving concern. After a while I went into the big offices and banks, figuring on lithographed stuff or estimating engraving costs for bonds and stocks; and I had a chance to observe the bankers and lawyers and promoters.

"Then I noticed from the talk I heard, that a banker will walk away from you when you say stock—unless it's a well-known, listed corporation paper; but a municipal bond gets his interest right off the reel.

"The engravers used to cop off a few extra blanks, when we had a bond job on for a municipality, and hold them out for some conservative victim. I guess they supplied the signatures and left behind them dozens of fifty year bonds that'll surprise some conservative investors when maturity-day comes.

"I've had my cut out of plenty of schemes, but all of them conservative like the bond-loan trick. They're the easiest, because the cautious banker, as a rule, takes more things for granted than the most careless rube. You can get him to accept a piece of wrapping-paper if it's printed like a municipal bond.

"Now I've lost interest in the small-profit drags. Making the big money easily has spoiled me for piker jobs. Bankers make me feel worse about it. Read their advertisements: 'Save your money!' Every time I read it, I feel like framing another bond-loan on some conservative banker. Municipal bonds will get these guys every time.

"If I had the dough to get by with, I'd beat it for Wall Street with the plates I've got, but I'm almost on my uppers, so I'm ready to put one over on some ultra-conservative financier. 'It's a fine game when it's played right,' as the golfers say, and it takes the conceit out of him when maturity-day comes.

"Now I'm back to the proposition. I hate to do it—it's so easy—but I'm loser on this town and I'm anxious to break even before I go. I need another man, so I'm inviting you in on it, if you're game, and I think you are. You introduce me at your bank and I'll borrow some money on the phoney bonds. Whatever I get on them will be all velvet; so count yourself in for half the money I borrow from your conservative banker."

Sam. P. Ross had sat inscrutable and motionless on his stool while the high-pitched voice of his visitor whined out this story. Now that it was concluded, he cleared his throat twice. He was a broad-shouldered, athletic man, past fifty, his tough face and neck seamed with deep wrinkles, thick-skinned, with coarse stubble underneath—the dull hue of a crabshell after it has been scalded with boiling water. His eyes were deep-set and almost hidden by shaggy, over-hanging brows. He wore a tan Norfolk suit, a negligee shirt, and a Windsor tie that hung in a limp, blue drape.

He was a spider-like person, motionless, then moving abruptly. His only pleasures in life were squeezed out of the sharp practices, at which, so far, he had never been detected. He handled subdivisions, sold houses and lots and conducted a

rental business in the little office, rent free, on the land of one of his clients.

At the Commercial and Savings Bank his account was a valued one; here he carried a substantial balance—subject to check. He might have placed the money in a savings' account, drawing four per-cent interest; but Sam had accumulated this money since his arrival, a year before, by methods which might make his immediate departure advisable at any time. So he restrained the desire to make interest on a savings' account which could not be withdrawn without thirty days' notice.

Sam was unscrupulous at heart, yet he was a very careful man. Propositions had to be demonstrated when submitted to him. If he saw even a remote chance of losing his part of an investment, it never interested him further. Had the rat-faced man invited him to share in some expenses of financing his scheme, Sam would have called for the police; but this safe and easy proposal—that he merely furnish an introduction at the bank—appealed to him instantly.

He cleared his throat again, smoothed down his Windsor tie with a hairy paw, and jerked his swinging feet up to the highest rounds on both sides of the stool on which he was perched.

"What," he said, his voice sounding monotonous, like that of a ticket-agent who answers the same question many times, "what do you intend to tell them at the bank?" He was waiting to know how much risk would be incurred on his part, should he lend his personality to the stranger.

"Well, first you introduce me," the rat-faced man replied, the high-pitched voice whining down to a low purr, "introduce me as a client, 'rented an apartment about a week ago'—and then you can bow yourself out.

"I tell 'em I'm going to locate here with a stationery and printing business. They always welcome a new account, so I offer to make a deposit and get a passbook in jig time.

"Then I ask the cashier if he will send some securities to his New York correspondent, to be held in escrow or represented by an interim certificate, until my investment broker can find a buyer.

"The rest is easy. The cashier always asks what they are, and I tell him municipals in denominations of five hundred dollars. Then he asks what the name of the bond is and I describe them: 'Springfield sixes, maturing in nineteen fifty—thirty-three years more to run.' Cashiers are all alike. I've hooked 'em before. His bond rate table will show him that on the present market,—that is, a four-and-a-half per cent basis,—my bonds are worth six hundred and thirty dollars apiece: but he thinks I don't know that. He'll offer me a little premium, and I'll tell him I'm a thousand times obliged and accept.

"When my account gets credit for the proceeds, I draw the money, cut it up with you fifty-fifty, and beat it. Suppose he don't offer to buy? All right. A few days later I'll ask him for a loan; but the first way's better, because it fetches more cash. The banker won't know the bonds are phoney for thirty-three years. It's a cinch! Give me a conservative banker every time. Easy! It's a shame to take the money."

Mr. Ross abruptly dangled his feet again, pulling the while at two bent forefingers, hooked together across his chest, and pondering with keen interest—not at all sure that he would lend his aid to this rat-faced individual's iniquitous plot, yet carefully considering the risk he would incur should he eliminate the stranger and float this paper himself. Why not make all of this money? Why divide? He was slyly thinking, however, that he would first see the trick demonstrated in a small way. Then, if it failed, he would be free from any suspicion and would be praised for his acumen in escaping the snares of a swindler. But if it worked—well—why not take advantage of the rat-faced man's confidence and get the stuff away from him? He would have it on him! He wouldn't dare to squeal! So motionless, but with an alert mind, Mr. Ross said in a monotonous voice:

"Go get your securities! We'll go up to

the Commercial and Savings Bank!"

When the undersized schemer had tripped out, Mr. Ross uncramped his dangling legs and snatched a check-book out of the redwood cabinet. He noted its balance—twenty-five hundred dollars—his net earnings of the past year in this peaceful community. A year, he was thinking; why not make that much in a much shorter time? How long would it take him to shape his affairs for a departure—with all bridges burned behind him? The calculation seemed, somehow, to bolster his confidence.

"I've been here long enough!" he thought. "Why not ditch this rummy, clean up, and make a get-away?"

Standing on the front sidewalk, a half hour later, his gaze wandered to a youthful figure in gray tweeds, hurrying in the direction of the corrugated-iron office. Not for a second had his thoughts left that rat-face since he last saw it. Sam had reached a decision as to his own main chance. So he stalked angularly back into the little office, ducked under the board counter, perched himself on the stool once more, cleared his throat twice—and waited.

"Here they are, Sam," piped the undersized man, whining less than usual and breathing quickly from the exertion of a brisk walk, as he darted in. The white straw hat was tilted back and he was unfastening the only button on the gray tweed coat. From the inner coat pocket he produced six crisp, neatly-folded documents—green engravings on tough, translucent paper—and laid five of them on the counter, carefully unfolding the sixth, which he had retained for Sam's inspection, saying:

"Half a dozen, Sam. Five hundred apiece."

The bonds, issued in nineteen hundred, were signed by the Mayor and Treasurer of the city of Springfield. Mr. Ross examined the open document closely, not only reading carefully every printed word, but crinkling the paper and holding the parchment against the light, in search of some water-mark. When at length he folded the bond and handed it back to the rat-faced man, his hand was clutching the other five. Silently, he transferred them to the redwood cabinet—which he locked, pocketing the key.

"What's the idea?" asked the undersized man, in some astonishment.

Mr. Ross reached for his hat precipitately.

"They're safe there," he said, in his usual monotone; "come on up to the bank."

Shortly, at the Commercial and Savings Bank, Harry Duncan, at the cashier's desk, was saying:

"Well, sir, since you intend to sell these bonds—"

"I certainly do, sir. When I go into the stationery business, I must purchase stock and equipment, and that will take—"

"I was going to say, sir," smiled Harry Duncan, bowing, "that you—well, you could sell *us* this bond. Would you care to consider an offer? We would give you credit at once—or you could take the cash—so as to get your business started without delay." He consulted a book of rate tables. "We—we will buy it and pay you a premium of one hundred dollars. That would make six hundred dollars available in cash."

The rat-faced man nudged Mr. Ross with his elbow.

"That will be satisfactory," said the new customer. "I have more of these bonds in my safe-deposit box, but will not need any more money on them for the present."

"It's good paper," said the cashier. "Bring it in when you're ready."

And being in no mind to waste his valuable time, the rat-faced man took the cash and departed forthwith, linking his arm in Sam's and leading him away with him.

A few minutes later, having reached the corrugated-iron office, Ross lumbered under the counter again, faced his grinning companion, but did not return his complacent smile. The rat-faced man was the first to speak.

"Pretty soft, eh?" he whined. "That conservative banker thinks he made thirty dollars on me." He counted three hundred dollars off the roll of bills. "You're

entitled to half, Sam," he drawled, "and you'd better hand me back the other five bonds. That cabinet's no protection. Somebody might frisk you."

Mr. Ross blinked twice, but made no move to comply with this request. His voice was as monotonous as usual, but a little husky now.

"I'll keep 'em," he said, clearing his throat, "and I'll give you six hundred dollars to shut up and skin out."

The rat-faced man was evidently astounded. His tenor voice cut the air in strident objection.

"Whatta ya mean, six hundred? Our agreement was half and half!"

Still motionless, as if there had been no unusual proposal, Mr. Ross replied:

"I listened to your story, but I didn't accept your offer—nor reject it either, then." He cleared his throat again. "You couldn't have done it without my introduction, so I'm rejecting your proposal and offering you my terms, now." He fished out a roll of bills from a money-belt, which he wore inside his shirt, fastened the white pearl buttons and smoothed down the Windsor tie; he counted the money awkwardly and continued: "My half of the bond sale you made at the bank is three hundred dollars, under our tentative agreement; here's three hundred more to make up your share under our subsequent agreement—six hundred—and I keep the bonds, or report you to the police."

Understanding from the redundancy of this shocking offer that the first proposal was no mere joke on Mr. Ross's part, the rat-faced man glared for a moment like one suddenly gone mad.

"Bilked!" he shrilled, in outraged amazement. He bit an inch off the end of his fat cigar and spat the tobacco on Mr. Ross's floor, but Mr. Ross, in a reproving tone replied:

"Duncan gave you six hundred, and I'm handing you three hundred more—a pretty good day's work, I say."

"Only twenty-five per cent of thirty-six hundred," whined the rat-faced man unhappily; "we were to divide fifty-fifty."

He tilted the white sailor and mopped the perspiration from his forehead. Mr. Ross's hairy finger pointed a silent answer, by indicating the pile of money on the counter. The under-sized man was getting out his wallet.

"You've got me roped and hog-tied," he said despondently. "I've gotta take it."

In silence, Mr. Ross watched him clutch the bills in his right hand, while with the left he drew the wallet from his inner coat pocket, tucked the money away, and returned the wallet to an inner vest pocket. His beady eyes gleamed with insulted egotism.

"I've turned tricks with dips, and even yeggmen, Sam," he slurred with studied insolence; "but you're not in their class. You're welshing on me because I'm helpless. Take it from me, Sam," he went on, "no self-respecting porch-climber, or stick-up man should associate with you; *they're* too honest!"

So saying, he fastened the one-button coat, tilted the white sailor hat, turned and strode out.

Making his way to the tiny apartment with the kitchenette, he prepared a cup of steaming coffee, which he drank with some cookies for a repast. He then packed his belongings and betook himself to the railroad station.

"Not so bad, at that!" he exulted to himself as he changed one of Sam's bills at the ticket-office. "Three hundred to the good, anyway, and that was a bum burg."

He reflected.

"But that cashier made thirty dollars on my only bond," he complained to himself, and that one wasn't phoney! I bought it for a *good* one!"

The train was pulling out, and the rat-faced man hung his sailor hat high above the cushioned seat, donned a woolen traveling-cap, which he tightened at a rakish angle on his head, and struck a match on his shoe.

"So long, Conservative Sam!" he mused with a quizzical smile, as he puffed at another fat cigar. "If that cashier falls for those phoney bonds—but I don't think he will—there'll be something doing when he presents the semi-annual interest coupons. And tomorrow's the first of July!"

A MODERN MARTYR

BY SUSAN AVERY MATHER

Please pass the nuxated iron. In this story we have a man who couldn't indulge in a common, every-day fit without having some fool doctor tamper with his vermiform appendix.

AFTER Philip Raymond M. D., was graduated from the Medical School as a Physician and Surgeon, it took him but a few weeks to locate in a small suburb beyond Yonkers. A cottage with a neat little office, a cozy den, comfortable bedrooms and dining-room and kitchen constituted his bachelor apartments. The house was just off the main business street of the village, and his swinging sign, brave in gold and black, could easily be seen by those who were passing along the thoroughfare. When he had spent all he dared of the small amount his education had left of his patrimony upon the furnishing of this little home, and had installed a capable Irish housekeeper, he felt at leisure to sit on the tiny porch with his book, behind the screen of the rambler rose, and watch for the messenger to ring the bell, ready to slip into the office and gravely receive the message himself if it were during office hours, or, if it were not, to listen while Bridget took the order and answered, "Ol'll tell the docthor whin he comes in." If the book sometimes slipped to the floor and the possible patient was forgotten in the vision of a certain dainty figure with laughing eyes, who should one day be near him when the bachelor quarters should swell to larger proportions—well, that is another story. Certainly, the office bell did not often disturb his day dreams.

The monotony of this life could not always last—it had to end one way or another. One day a group of laborers upon the trolley line which was to link the little suburb with what was destined to be the great chain of Greater New York had reached a point within the doctor's range of vision, when a sudden commotion among them aroused him at his station on the porch. Then he saw that a man had fallen, and, as one pointed to the doctor's sign, several others lifted him and brought him toward the house. Doctor Raymond received them with his most dignified manner, heard their report that the foreman of the gang—for it was he who had fallen—had eaten no lunch and seemed to be in pain—that after they had returned to work he had suddenly clapped his hand to his right side and dropped to the ground; that he lived by himself, and had no relatives, so far as they knew.

While the doctor listened he was hurriedly using restoratives and thoroughly examining his patient. He was soon convinced that an acute attack of appendicitis had caused the loss of consciousness, and that an operation should be performed at once.

This disease had been causing a great stir in medical circles while Philip was pursuing his course in medicine, and he had made a special study of cases and their treatment. His elation at having an opportunity to use his knowledge and skill was somewhat tempered by the severity of his patient's attack and the fact that he had neither trained assistants nor the conveniences of a hospital. However, it was impossible to evade a plain duty, and as there was no other physician nor any sort of a nurse to be had in less than two hours' time, he quickly improvised an operating table and gave such instructions to Bridget and two of the most intelligent-looking of the men as would enable them to help in the task.

The delicate operation was performed with complete success and the patient put to bed in the doctor's own apartment, for he dared not risk a removal. It was one of those cases where the appendix showed no sign of obstruction; indeed, there was an unusually healthy condition, which promised a safe and speedy recovery, especially as the patient was a strong man not over thirty years of age.

"He will need very little attention to-night," said the doctor, "and to-morrow morning I will procure a nurse. If he has friends who wish other medical attendance for him, they are at perfect liberty to send any one they choose."

"Faith, an' himsilf is all the frinds and rilatives he has," said one, "but it's mesilf will take wurrd to the Boss."

The patient recovered consciousness quite suddenly, just as the doctor was beginning to feel uneasy at the prolonged state of coma which did not show any signs of yielding to his efforts.

"Wal, I've sure got a fine berth this time," suddenly greeted the doctor's ears. He turned quickly to the bed in time to see his man preparing to rise. "No! no!" expostulated Doctor Raymond. "Wait a a moment and I will explain." Then, as gently as possible, the doctor told the man what had occurred. "Appendiceetis! Appendix to the dictionary! and didn't ye go through my pockets?" "My good man, I'm not a highway robber," said the doctor beginning to fear that the patient's mind was unbalanced. "Wal, good Lord, I wish 't ye had 'a' bin. I'd be better off now with all my appendixes and suppelmunts, fur tha' wa'n't nuthin' in my *pockets* that I'd miss ef ye'd only stopped at *them*. Now, jess go look in the inside pocket to my coat, 'n' see what ye'll find." Doctor Raymond obeyed, and found a paper on which was written: "I have fits. Take off my coat and put me where it is cool and quiet. I'll come to in two or three hours."

"Ye see, Doc., I thought o' course they'd look in my pockets, ef I was took 'ith one o' my spells, to see where to take me or who my folks was. I ain't hed one now for nigh on five year; tho't mebbe I'd got shet of 'em. Anyhow, 'twouldn't do to tell the men—'twould queer me with 'em. But I'll be dummed ef I ever tho't of anybody cuttin' me up. I've had 'em ever sence I was a kid, 'n' they've done everything. Used to bleed me; 'n' onct my hair was all took off my head with stuff they put on,—most o' the skin, too. They blistered my feet so't I couldn't walk; but nuthin' did no good, so they finally got to lettin' me alone 'n' I was beginnin' to git better. I kinder outgrowed 'em 'n' come back East to sort o' git away from my reppitation. Thought mebbe change o' climate 'n' livin' out o' doors ud fix me."

It seemed best for both his patient and himself to avoid conversation for the rest of the night, so, making him comfortable and telling him to call if he wished anything, Doctor Raymond lay down on a couch in his den. There was little danger that sleep would interfere with his duties as a nurse. The chagrin and mortification at his professional error was not his only trouble, though he realized what the result might be if the man wished to be disagreeable. Youth has strong confidence in itself, and he felt sure of being able, by starting anew elsewhere, to overcome any adverse criticism which might arise. But, alas! his finances would hardly bear the strain of entertaining the invalid, if he proved to a guest instead of a paying patient, though no thought of this had entered Raymond's mind when he took the sufferer in as an act of common humanity; and so, if the small revenue his meager practice brought were cut off, and he must move and wait again, is it strange that the morning found him more haggard than his patient, who slept heavily until daylight?

As the doctor sat before his untasted breakfast, the Irish laborer brought a note from the superintendent, saying that Thomas Wheeler was a valuable man and the company would bear the expense of his illness and keep up his pay. The doctor was instructed to procure whatever help was needed to care for him properly. Raymond assured the man that the patient had passed a comfortable night, and that there was every reason to believe he would

be out in two or three weeks' time. When the message and the good wishes of his fellow-laborers were repeated to Wheeler, he exclaimed: "Well, Doc., ye look's if ye was as much cut up 'bout this's I be, tho' it's all in yer feelin's in *your* case. Now, I've been doin' a spell o' thinkin' over this here sitooation, 'n' I do' know's it'll help matters any fer me to kick. My appendix is gone—can't never have appendiceetis now, for sure, that's one comfort. 'Twouldn't do me no good to tell folks that 'twa'n't your high-soundin' disease after all, jes' a plain, common fit, 'n' no use o' me losin' my sequel, 'n' I kin see how it might give *you* a mighty lot 'o' trouble. I'm havin' a vacation on full pay 'n' you're bein' put to all the onconvenience. So let's shake on it, Doc., 'n' we'll call it square. Mebbe it's helped yer git yer eye-teeth thro' a leetle further."

So the little household, with the addition of the invalid and his nurse, moved smoothly on for two weeks, when the patient was pronounced able to leave for his own lodgings. It was with real regret that Raymond bade him good-by; for his frank friendliness and homely philosophy had been a cheering thing to the lonely young physician.

Five years later, Doctor Raymond had become one of the visiting physicians at a large city hospital, when one day he was hurriedly called into the operating-room to assist the chief surgeon with a case of appendicitis. The patient was prepared for the operation when Dortor Raymond entered, and they silently fell into their places and watched the skilful work. Everything proceeded as usual until the culminating point of the task was reached, when it was found that there was no appendix to be removed. As the man was being taken to a ward, a sudden suspicion caused Doctor Raymond to look intently at his face, and he recognized his old friend, Thomas Wheeler. It was not his duty to visit that ward, and he found no opportunity to speak with Wheeler until a few days before he was discharged from the hospital. The nurse left the bedside as Raymond passed, and he took the opportunity to step quietly before the patient.

"Wal, Doc., is it you?" he said. "'Twa'n't so strange ye made a mistake, boy as ye was, now, was it, when this here big gun went 'n' done th' same thing? 'N' I thought I had 'em fixed sure this time with a piece o' parchment sewed to my shirt; but I'll be dummed ef th' blamed sweat didn't blur the writin' so't they couldn't read it. I'll fix it some way tho' for the next time."

Again an ambulance responded to a hurry call, and a patient was taken at once to the operating-room. The examination of the head physician confirmed the report of the emergency doctor: An acute attack of appendicitis. Immediate operation necessary.

Doctor Raymond was summoned. Suddenly, the nurse who was preparing the patient for the operating-table exclaimed: "Oh, doctor, please look at this!"

The surgeon stooped over the prostrate man and found tatooed across his abdomen these words:

"Stop. Don't cut. Appendix removed twice."

Stepping to the man's head he found again his old patient, about to be for the third time a martyr.

NEXT month: THE DEATH MASK *by Ladd Plumley*. It is about an artist who becomes a fatalist through the discovery of a murderer's death mask in which his own features are duplicated.

(*Continued from page 2*)

detail, and the author enlivens the tale by references to Mary Pickford, the Woolworth building, the food-dictator and other minutiæ of our common experience, but much of this material is dragged in with the hope that it will be humorous, even though it may be inconsistent with the character of the narrator. Such an encyclopedic array of knowledge is not in keeping with the character of a slangy, sentimental cigar clerk. The realistic tendency of the story is exemplified, perhaps more than in any other way, by the desire of the country lass for city life. Optimism rather than technique is the distinguishing feature of the story.

GENTLEMEN OF GENEROSITY is a story without padding or procrastination. It strikes straight to the heart of the action at the beginning. This is not a mystery story but it is interesting from a psychological standpoint. Its technique is excellent and that much desired attribute, the single effect, is there clear and strong. The men's conflicting emotions sway back and forth like the players in a closely contested football game. This interplay of the characters—their reaction to the varying situations is cleverly balanced. There is not an irrelevant word present, and the story has elements of suspense that keep growing in intensity from the beginning to its completion.

IN LIEU OF LEAP YEAR is a story in which the plot drags and the figures of speech are too ultra modern to be either forceful or artistic. Phidias is a creation—one of those strange, prosaic beings who seek tirelessly for poetic expression of the romance that they feel but cannot interpret. It would be hard to find such a man as he who would shout in agitation, "Mother, from whence came this paper?" The story abounds with philosophical comments and author's asides, which are pardonable only when strikingly clever. One is not moved to concede the privilege in this case.

A YOUNG MAN'S FANCY is placed last because it attempts the most unsuccessfully. The author does not seem to visualize her characters. "Katherine was an extremely pretty and very charming girl." That may mean that she weighed three hundred pounds, which is the Turkish taste. It gives no idea of her save that she was attractive to the author. It is evident, however, that Katherine was not a modern or at least not a Shavian girl. She was much in love with Marshall and he caught on to the fact, but "not because she had told him or shown it in any unmaidenly fashion." This story needs to be born again. It is a spring idyll that aims to be sweet, but is merely languid.

The five dollar prize winners in the sixth contest were: Ruth G. Bowman, New Orleans, La.; Warren E. Crane, Seattle, Wash.; Mrs. Edna Willard, San Diego, Calif.; J. C. Long, New York, N. Y.; William L. Huntsman, Clinton, N. Y.

The Ninth Contest comprises the stories in this issue, (August); and all lists must be received at the office of THE BLACK CAT, Salem, Mass., before September 1st. Prizes will be awarded September 10th; and the result of the contest will be announced in the November BLACK CAT, issued October 15th.

A PRIZE of $25 will be awarded to the author of the story which is selected as the best story of the month by the largest number of club members.

PRIZES of $5 EACH will be awarded to the five members submitting the best criticisms.

A copy of THE BLACK CAT should be obtainable at any news stand, or it will be mailed to any address on receipt of ten cents. Members will find it to their advantage to become regular subscribers. The subscription price is one dollar per year. Any club member sending two yearly subscriptions will receive the magazine for one year free.

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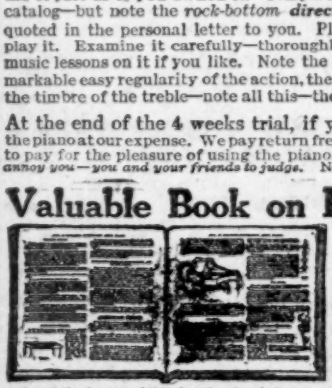

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